

eye. Her effort was rewarded with a perfect strike and treasured prize, but she shielded her trophy from Inizio whom she knew would disapprove.

Later, *The Keeper* came faithfully with a fresh supply of all that sustained them. Especially on this visit, Inizio thought about all that was said. He had convinced his spirit that the words of the intruder were false, but he could not erase the fact that ideas were erected.

On the other hand, Inizia watched carefully as the beacon of light approached, then faded. She tried to peer in the direction of the light to somehow see around it. She so wanted to catch a glimpse of his countenance. Perhaps, if lucky, she could even crystallize a facial impression, if not directly, maybe in shadow form. As much as she desired it, the brightness was greater than her natural ability. The light was impenetrable by human eyes. Tears running from her face evidenced the attempt. Furthermore, Inizia could not even ascertain a direction in which a shadow was cast. To see *The Keeper's* face was not a simple task, no matter the degree of calculation nor the wit of the calculator. What she was able to glean, only as the light retreated, was a faint pendulum motion.

That wisp of information solidified her doubt. If *The Keeper* was indeed a man not unlike herself, why should he be the one to come and go? Why cannot she be a guardian of abundance with the ability to keep? She determined that somehow she must broach the subject again with Inizio, for she could not act alone. They had but one lamp.

It seems they were an open book on the subject, ready for lines to be scribbled in to weave a story to his own liking. His last statement appeared to strike its mark profoundly.

“You have seen *The Keeper’s* face?” asked Inizia, now warmly petrified. “His lamp is so strong, we are not even able to gaze upon him!”

“I have seen him face-to-face in his chamber. When I looked him in the eye, I thought no less of myself. Before that, I too feared him. Afterwards, I knew my future was here, away from all he owns or enslaves,” whipped the intruder.

“To snuff out our lamp merely to avoid detection is an irreversible course. Your moment to gage response would be too dire for us, for we have no means to re-engage our light once it is lost,” answered Inizio.

“If that is all you require, I have a flint. Here, take it. It is yours,” ventured the intruder, extending his hand.

“We will not walk this reckless path,” remarked Inizio, shaking his head. “It is a woeful risk just to test one man’s fanciful thoughts. Please depart from us, for your rebellious words grieve our hearts.”

“Very well, then. Enjoy your servanthood in blissful ignorance,” closed the intruder. With that, he lowered his light intensity and wandered off in the direction from which he came. It was a long walk, a calculated walk, a surveyed retreat until an opportune time.

In the little light that remained, Inizia caught a reflection in the corner of her eye. The flint that the intruder presumably intended for his pocket had missed the mark. As Inizio turned body and lantern to guide the way, Inizia quietly thrust her hand into the darkness in the direction of the reflection in her mind’s

because his property has taken undue liberty. Woe to the man standing in the path of his wrathful quest to restore sovereignty. Test me in this, and you will discern your true disposition,” retorted the intruder.

“Would we not also escape *The Keeper’s* provision?” prompted Inizia, who was until now satisfied to remain silent during this exchange.

With heightened potential in the second of possible audiences, the intruder refocused his dialog. “Escape is possible, and so is survival on your own merit. Look at me. My lamp is full, and so is my stomach. Is more proof necessary? Why settle for just enough when more is possible?” Sensing apprehension, the intruder backpedaled, “Nonetheless, if it is only a test you desire, you could simply hide and show yourselves at a convenient time – a time when the status with your keeper is mirrored in action. If you are right, the test will result only in a stroke of your confidence,” chided the intruder. He spoke to Inizio, but his attention was directed elsewhere.

“How can we even entertain such ruse? *The Keeper* has always known our whereabouts. He has always found us here. His lamp penetrates the darkness,” responded Inizio.

“And you have always desired to be found,” lashed the intruder, “and therein lies the difference. He is drawn by your light, however so dim. Why do you think he supplies you the oil? Why do you suppose he asks that your lamp be forever trimmed? He has found his prisoners obedient to that which binds them to his watchful eye. If you extinguished your lamp, be it just for a moment, you could see in your keeper’s face who he is and whose you are.” The intruder found pleasure in this exchange of logic. He knew the longer he could prolong the conversation and the process of rational thought, the better his opportunity to strike a chord. He especially delighted in the notion of supplying missing information concerning *The Keeper*.

“What do you mean by confiscation of all you are and have?” asked Inizio. “Were you not given everything according to your need?”

“You know nothing of my needs! I only wanted to relieve *The Keeper* of some of his burden. That is why I started a collection of my own to keep and supply. That brought me here. Here I come and go as I please, unlike yourselves,” fired the intruder.

“Again, we have no chains!” cried an irritated Inizio.

“Do you not wait here for your keeper to parcel your rations: your daily bread, your precious sacrament of oil? What if he didn’t show? What if when he came, you hid yourselves? Could you survive on your own?” responded the confident intruder.

“If *The Keeper* did not come, we would have neither means to keep warm nor mode to see the path we tread, yet the desire to hide has never been part of us. It seems unnatural. To give up comfort in the wake of a stranger’s yarn also appears to be a foolish exploit. We have no desire to fret *The Keeper* with disobedience,” replied Inizio. A glance at Inizia revealed a surety not so well founded, but Inizia’s confidence in Inizio was transmitted through the warmth of a grip now skirting Inizio’s arm and the closeness now enjoyed by the proximity of their torsos. Inizio’s muscular build had always afforded Inizia a cloak of protection she cherished, but her decisions were by proxy. She now had doubts of her own.

“Your words are spoken in a strength not shared by your curiosity. Tell me, what do you suppose would be your keeper’s reaction if you escaped? If he loved you, would he not express concern for your wellbeing, searching endlessly until that anxiety be relieved. However, if you were indeed his bondservants, do you not think he would rather be filled with rage at his loss? No, the slavemaster that he is would lash out in word and deed,

give us food and supplies – all we need, but we have no chains – no lock and key. We are not prisoners.”

“Chains? No, ... at least not literally speaking, but you are tethered nevertheless.” After allowing the phrase to soak in a little more deeply, the intruder continued, “Tell me, have you been allowed into your keeper’s chamber?”

“No, our home is here. We know little of *The Keeper* except he brings us what we need,” resubmitted Inizio.

“If you’d seen his quarters and tasted his opulence, you’d know what squalor you have been allotted here in this dungeon,” remarked the intruder.

“You’ve seen this place?” questioned Inizio.

“Of course! I would not speak of such things on the basis of rumor. His chamber is beyond description: walls of jasper, gates of pearl, walkways in gold. Silver is of little value there. Tell me, where are your precious gems? I fail to see your gold, but I do see plenty of red earth and hoards of cold stone. No, this is but a footstool, and you are kept as animals in a pen. Your keeper wished to enslave me also, but I would have none of it. I came here to warn you of this duplicity. He tosses you a few crumbs and some oil, and you are here in the dark none the wiser,” added the intruder.

“It’s not dark there?” encroached Inizio.

“No. No lamp is required at all. The light touches everything. Everything is exposed – treasures, thoughts, motives. That is precisely the reason I came here ... to avoid confiscation of all I have and all I am and, of course, to warn you.”

garment reflect any visible light. As the coat gently fluttered in the breeze, the intruder's silhouette could almost be better interpreted by the space no longer occupied – a sort of negative shadow. His form spawned doubt, but all mystique was overwhelmed by a pair of trustworthy eyes, as alluring as polished black onyx. This, too, gave a rush of comfort over Inizia, though she was unsure if Inizio had a common first impression. She wasn't even sure if the encounter were sufficient for Inizio. After all, the intruder turned away from the lamp into *her* line of sight.

The intruder continued, "The longer we're here, the less need we have of light. There is a compensating effect in the dark. We develop a greater self-awareness, and sooner or later, we don't even need the light at all. In fact, the transformation is swift if one simply disregards the light entirely, though this takes an enormous leap of faith."

"But you carry a lamp!" countered Inizio.

"Yes, a lamp," replied the intruder, "... but I only secured it on this journey for your benefit. I could just as easily douse the flame entirely."

"How can you speak of such things? We were instructed to never allow our flame to extinguish. Does not *The Keeper* bring you oil as he does us?" castigated Inizio.

"Ah ... *The Keeper*. I've not heard that name for a long while. No, your keeper supplies me with nothing. My oil ... is, well, my oil," replied the intruder matter-of-factly. "I suppose he grants you rations as well?" Answering himself, he continued, "But of course, he would. After all, you are his bondservants."

That last comment drew an expression of raw disbelief, visible on Inizio and Inizia, even in dimly lit circumstances. "Bondservants? I think not," rebutted Inizio. "*The Keeper* does

approaching light. Only at a distance of twenty paces was Inizia able to piece together the pattern fragments in the alternating sequence of shadows as human. What seemed like a bright light cutting through the darkness was only a dim lamp, poorly trimmed. At three paces, the figure stopped, and a wave of peculiar coolness swept across Inizia, which she enjoyed thoroughly. The cool breeze seemed to accompany the figure, and waves of new pleasure caressed her silky skin along with his words.

“I didn’t know there was anyone else here,” spoke the intruder.

“Neither did we,” responded Inizio cautiously, for the surge of foreign air made the hair on the back of his neck stand on end.

“I suppose you wouldn’t on this side,” tossed the intruder.

Baffled by the comment, Inizia strained to see the man’s face. You can tell a lot by a man’s face, especially the eyes – at least Inizia was well adept at doing so with Inizio. It was definitely a male voice – a curiously soothing blend of bass tones. She reached across and touched Inizio’s forearm, the one clutching their lamp. Inizio nodded and lifted their lamp carriage higher to illumine the intruder’s face, instinctively assessing Inizia’s anxiety.

“Please!” implored the intruder, backing up two steps and shielding his eyes with an outstretched hand. “After so much time in the dark, I’ve developed a hypersensitivity to light,” he added.

From her vantage point, Inizia caught more than an outline during that brief moment of illumination. The intruder was a ruddy fellow with attractive yet unrefined features. His clothing was functional, yet unimpressive. A thin layer of sojourner’s dust seemed to be all that made his dark, loose-fitting outer

In a space which was void, but suddenly filled, in a time given reference only by the deceleration of pure energy down to the speed of light, mass in three dimensions was cast into being. The inhabitants of this space were likewise initiated, complete in form and function. It was a delightful space, a glorious space, a space lacking only the essence of the designer, yet the trace of his splendor was everywhere.

In this space, light and darkness were not opposites. Darkness was the absence of light. Light was something; darkness was not. With varying degrees of light intensity possible, each term became relative – but not without standard. This space had ample light, but it seemed dreadfully lacking, especially following visitation by *The Keeper*. All other light paled by comparison.

The pair of occupants in this space was afforded a lamp, which emitted enough light for those in its possession to see perhaps five or ten paces ahead of their present position – but no more. To see beyond, one must advance a step. Still, there was little reason to wander, for all they needed was present. What was considered necessary to replenish, *The Keeper* supplied. Of all *The Keeper* furnished, nothing was more precious than oil to tend the lamp, for the lamp supplied more than illumination; the light kept darkness at bay.

A faint light approached the occupants of *this* space from an unfamiliar direction. They did not know what to think of the glow that began as simply a dot and slowly increased in size and intensity. In order to improve their range of vision, Inizio lowered the air intake supply to their lamp, careful not to snuff out the flame, for neither Inizio nor Inizia had means to re-establish a quenched lamp. The lessening of their own emitted light had the intended effect, for the dot elongated slightly. Now, there was also a noticeable sway to and fro, much like their own lamp would toddle along with a human gait. The arc of the pendulum motion grew in accordance with the intensity of the



In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Gen. 1:1-2

*You are my lamp, O LORD; the
LORD turns my darkness into light.*

2 Samuel 22:29

Part A



Inizio *I begin*

Inizia *She begins*

Out of the Shadows

How long, O Lord, must I live in the shadow of your blessing,
Never to feel the rain on my face,
Never to know your love overflowing,
Never to get lost in the abundance of You?

Here in the shadows, there is safe haven,
Never fully exposed to the elements,
Never completely vulnerable to the extremes,
Never revealed for the fool that I am.

Lord, I long to step out from the shadows,
To experience the extent of your mercy,
To share in your suffering and joy,
To know the full measure of life.

Lord, I choose to step out of the shadows,
So that I can witness your majesty,
So that I can testify to your goodness,
So that I can cast a shadow for the first time.

R. D. Hazlett

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