

The Ascent of Mt. Carmel

St. John of the Cross, 1585¹

1. One dark night,
Fired with love's urgent longings
-Ah, the sheer grace!-
I went out unseen,
My house being now all stilled;

2. In darkness, and secure,
By the secret ladder, disguised,
-Ah, the sheer grace!-
In darkness and concealment,
My house being now all stilled;

3. On that glad night,
In secret, for no one saw me,
Nor did I look at anything,
With no other light or guide
Than the one that burned in my heart;

4. This guided me
More surely than the light of noon
To where He waited for me
-Him I knew so well-
In a place where no one else appeared.

5. O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
The Lover with His beloved,
Transforming the beloved in her Lover.

6. Upon my flowering breast
Which I kept wholly for Him alone,
There He lay sleeping,
And I caressing Him
There in a breeze from the fanning cedars.

7. When the breeze blew from the turret
Parting His hair,

¹ *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991, p. 113-114. Used with permission.

He wounded my neck
With His gentle hand,
Suspending all my senses.

8. I abandoned and forgot myself,
Laying my face on my Beloved;
All things ceased; I went out from myself,
Leaving my cares
Forgotten among the lilies