

The Master

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Atop the cliff, the stronghold stands,
Harsh, stone, impenetrable.
None can pierce the age-old ballasts,
Or scale the man-made mountain.

Faithful warriors watch and walk,
For the enemy is near.
Brave warriors, will your general arrive in time?
Has he not abandoned you to certain death?
He has left, never to return.

Three days ago, he set off,
Promising to hasten back to his ironclad home,
The well-known haunt of his youth.

And yet
He has not returned.
Darkness presides like a judge over the faithful few.
Now they see and understand.
He was the beacon from the lighthouse on the shore,
Illuminating their path, protecting, saving, showing the way.

A shudder seeps through the soldiers,
Fear, the tempting serpent,
Slowly steals them away.

Like lightning before the storm, word spreads,
"The Evil One is in the valley,
With fiends ten thousand strong
Ready to scale the mountainside."

Yet there is no sign of the master.

Darkness cloaks the Evil One.
They see him not,
But his sinister drums bear witness.

Surer than the skillful archer's shaft,
The men begin to fall,
Prey to unreasoning terror.

Then speaks one among them,
The Master's closest friend, his second in command,
"Let us run, flee from this cold, stone castle,
For if we stay, it will become our burial tomb.
The master will not return, to die has left us.

We must leave, and quickly,
Or the Evil One will take us all,
None to carry the message.”

For one moment they hesitate,
Then rises the battle cry of the Evil One
And each fights, though not the enemy.
He fights his fellow soldier
For he himself must be the first to leave.

Finally they rush out into the open air,
Under the beating rain,
Punishing the cowards.

The fortress still stands behind them,
The last beacon of truth they fought so hard to protect.
Now they flee from it like thieves in the night,
Never again to seek safety inside.

If they could only see the face of the Master,
Crawling to mount the lofty wall,
The lone protector of their lighthouse,
With only the rain to wash his rugged, bloodstained face.
If they only heard of his arrival
All would be well,
But the enemy saw to that.
Their newest leader would leave none alive,
Indeed his cords still bind the Master.

POUND! POUND!
Comes the message of doom from the gateway.
SPLINTER! CRACK!
No hope consoles their unflinching Master.
Even could he rise, there is no escape.

Soon servants of the Evil One will find him,
Mock him, spit on him, taunt him.
Like Samson the powerful,
Felled by his trusted Delilah.

Dying lies the Master,
Inside his citadel of old,
His man-made mountain,
His impenetrable home,
Stabbed through the heart by his friend.