

THE LAST PITCH OF THE STAIR

Walter Nash

In the days of candlelight
at the last pitch of the stair
was the place at bedtime every night
where I balked and resisted, bawling in fright,
because the devils were there.

Where the old bead-curtain hung
I felt them touch my head.
I thought they fingered my lips and tongue,
and sightless upon my eyelids swung
the malevolent undead.

To poultice my alarm
and make the devils go,
sister would chant some powerful charm
like “Old Macdonald had a farm”
or “One man went to mow.”

Songs are healers, and some
have the merit of answered prayer;
then I pray God send me tunes to hum
or verses to make, when I shall come
to the last pitch of the stair.

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