

Anatomy of a Sabbath

(poem by Renée Ellison, November 1999)

*The last rays of Friday cling and claw to stay,
But are resolutely brushed away by dusk.
Now 'tis evening dark*

sundown

flurry finished.

Rest begun.

Come Sabbath, come.

The flesh stops.

But the mind whirls on

Like water in a pan still sloshing when it is suddenly swung up to its rest.

The LORD? Fix my mind on Him for longer devotion? How?

Work addiction still storms at the base of my soul.

The brain caves in, struggles free, caves in...

Do no regular work?¹ *Is it possible?*

Perhaps my body can comply, but can my mind?, my spirit?

Down boy, down. Cease thy labor.

I renounce that prod to do just one little thing more.

No, don't rally, body, don't answer. Down. Quiet.

The dogfight to quit the world consumes the first virgin hours of rest.

No focus yet to worship. Still fog.

Still prying off the fingers of taskmasters that clutch me.

The ceasing eventually comes...slowly...like a train,

Chugging its last, and coasting into the station.

Work almost under.

*Oh, but now **pleasure**² rears her head:*

¹ Leviticus 23:3: "But the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest...you are not to do any work."

*“Come, love, come away.
Surely your own pleasure should renew! ‘Tis worthy of you (earned by you).”
Pleasure beckons, allures, tugs at emotions and sentimentality.
Tempts... “You haven’t had any ALL week.”
The time is ripe, the weather cunning,
But like a bird flying again and again at the closed window of my resolve.
Pleasure at last turns and scuttles away.*

*Here, now, yet another temptress to overcome?
My own words³ arise? Speaking my own words...
Seems right, `twill maybe even nourish others.
Letter-writing, phone calls—getting caught up with old friends,
Celebrating with the freed-up time!
Yes, and around the edges why not plan, envision, evaluate, prioritize, write.
What better use of time is there? The LORD? Who is He?*

*Yes, I remember...shamefaced.
It comes back to me now.
His appointment. My better **delight**.⁴
Stand still.
Take off thy shoes.*

*World withdrawal, complete. Ten-four. Over and out.
Now on to the matter of prayer,
Mulling over His word,
Voicing adoration...hmmm.*

*Lazy soul. Douse you. Get up.
Who wouldn’t rise to meet such company if they knew ‘twere really He!*

Steady now, devotion. Prime the heart, tend it,

² Isaiah 58:13a: “Keep your feet from doing as you please...”

³ Isaiah 58:13b: “...or speaking your own words...”

⁴ Isaiah 58:13c: “...call the Sabbath a delight...”

Bring the cold heart into His warm hands.

*Ah, sweet rest. Thirst quenched. Bread slowly chewing.
No rush. No haste. Complete repose,
In the wonder of Him.
He, whispering over me, "Who touched me?"
Virtue flowing from His robes.*

*Distant clamor of work mutters one last faint hurrah.
I lift not my head. Go away. I am the LORD's and He is mine.*

Divine outpourings⁵ *drip over me*
Wine-stinging-refreshment satiates my inner man.
*My praise*⁶ *decorates Him*
And strangely, as I give it, He makes my own countenance to glow.

*Oh, let me linger still. No sluggishness now.
Hot steady fire, wanting more. My poor fuel. His rich flame.
Would that there were no other life.
As I fully enter His rest, never am I more fully alive.*

*Too soon the Sabbath draws to a close. Dusk encroaches again.
But just as low burning coals from the night refuse to go out, and feed the morn,
So shall our renewed Sabbath love feed the coming day.*

⁵ Isaiah 58:13d: "...you will find your joy in the LORD..."

⁶ Psalm 33:1 (NASB): "praise becomes the righteous."