

The Past Regained

by: Beth Ann Austin

A falcon swept through clouds on high,
It dove to catch a fleeing prey
When, suddenly, it heard a cry
And turned to where its mistress lay.

The mistress, staring out to sea
Was not sure why she had called out.
It seemed to be a kind of plea --
A need to cover up her doubt.

A cold wind flicked her raven hair
And stung her flashing, emerald eyes,
But frigid winds could not lay bare
The whereabouts of this girl's ties.

No one knew just who she was
Or what it was from which she ran.
No one knew of her because
She would not stay near any man.

The only relic of her past
Was a tarnished gold signet ring.
Upon a chain, it was held fast
Around her neck, close to her skin.

She kept it there, away from view,
This symbol of her former might --
This ring of Lords, the only clue,
Kept hidden from a stranger's sight.

The falcon circled o'er her head.
It called to her as if to say,
"If you had not called from your bed,
I could have caught my timid prey."

The girl then gave a rare sweet smile
Unto the bird -- her single friend.
The lone one who stayed every mile,
And on who's presence she'd depend.

She found the bird when it was young
And she was only nine years old.
Out from its nest it had been flung.
The bird's right wing refused to fold.

She nursed the poor bird back to health.
She cared for it and loved it, too.
And though the bird could not give wealth,
It gave her friendship -- pure and true.

The girl got up then from her bed
That she had made amid the stones.
Out to the north she turned her head
And went on into the unknown.

For three long years she'd walked like this
Not knowing where she meant to go
And, in her heart, this girl did miss
Companionship of friend or foe.

It was herself from whom she ran
And from the golden ring she clasped.
She could not flee -- for no one can
Escape from knowledge of their past.

The memory which caused her pain
Was three years old that very day.
Yet still, to her, it seemed as plain
As if right next to her it lay.

She gave her heart unto a man,
He gave himself to her in turn,
But neither knew about the plan --
A plot there was to destroy her.

This girl -- the daughter of a lord
Who ruled the lands with iron fist --
Her death would merit great reward
From those upon the lord's black list.

Those rivals of her father's rule
Could exploit every weakness shown
And they would gladly be so cruel
To take away one of his own.

So this is why, as darkness fell,
Disaster struck in this girl's life.
Her lover came to ring her bell.
He met not her. He met a knife.

And when the girl came to her door
To find the reason for the sound,
She found her lover on the floor
And fell to her knees on the ground.

As salty tears streamed down her cheek,
She found that he could draw breath still.
She heard him say, though it was meek,
“I love you and I always will.”

There, wrapped inside his lover’s arms,
This wounded man drew his last breath.
He felt that he was safe from harm
And surrendered himself to death.

The poor girl’s heart, upon that day
Was broken -- smashed beyond repair.
She felt the blame did squarely lay
Upon herself, for her to bear.

That was when this girl, fair and young,
Went far away from kin and clan.
She did not want to be among
Those she could hurt as was that man.

She packed her bags that very night
And with her took her father’s ring
In case she’d ever want, in flight,
Proof of from where she was running.

The sun was up before she knew
The companion she had attained.
Her falcon far above her flew --
His loyalty had not been feigned.

And this girl was wandering still.
Though years had passed, her pain did stay
So that morn she walked vale and hill
And she did not stop with the day.

She walked far into northern lands
Stopping only five hours each night.
The air grew colder and the sands
On beaches turned to stones of white.

A gentle snow began to fall.
Each flake fell slowly to the ground.
The girl ignored the snow and all
The darkened clouds toward her bound.

But, after a few days, she saw
That snowfalls only thicken here.
There would not be a welcome thaw
Until the springtime of the year.

The snow fell thick around her now
And north-east winds began to blow.
She knew she had to find, somehow,
Some shelter or freeze in the snow.

She felt a weight upon her arm
And knew her falcon found his way.
She said, "Find a place safe from harm,"
So he flew on into the day.

The storm grew thicker, wilder still.
The frigid girl refused to think
That she would die against her will.
She'd bring herself back from the brink.

So she kept fighting through the storm,
Though she felt the cold in her bones.
She kept her thoughts where it was warm
And let the wind drown out her moans.

The bitter wind gnawed at her skin
And froze her slender fingers numb.
Snow stuck to her face darkening
Her view and blocking things to come.

Her hope had dwindled close to naught
And all her joints began to seize
When the cruel blizzard which she fought
Did suddenly begin to ease.

The girl groped further through the snow
And found the cause for this relief.
It was a wall! So she did know
That she was saved now from her grief.

But still the wind was bitter cold
And the girl felt herself get weak.
Underneath her, her legs did fold.
Against the wall, she pressed her cheek.

The wall gave way beneath her weight
And she was blinded by a light.
"My! you are in an awful state,"
She heard a voice say in the night.

She saw a man's face look at her --
He did both worry and rejoice.
Her vision blocked, he was a blur,
But she did recognize his voice.

Her mind was cast back many years
Into her days of joyful youth,
When suddenly she felt his tears
And, in an instant, knew the truth.

The man bent down and held her tight.
Three years had seen their roles reversed.
The man who'd died that fateful night
Was here. She felt that she would burst.

She tried to speak, but she could not --
Her jaw clenched, her lips shook with cold.
She strove to breathe, but as she fought
She felt her body could not hold.

The joy had left her lover's face
As he carried her to the bed.
She shivered with increasing pace,
But her one thought was *He's not dead!*

Her mind grew darker, the room spun,
But he held fast and gave her heat.
He whispered, "There was never one
Short moment I bowed to defeat.

"I knew the day that I came to
That I could not give up this chance.
When I had strength, I searched for you.
I never looked back -- not a glance."

He wept his tears upon her face.
They melted the cruel ice away.
But naught could slow the horrid pace
At which the girl's health did decay.

She found the breath to say to him,
"I love you." Then she slipped away.
He kept his hope, though it was dim,
That they would see another day.

He'd defied death for three long years
Without her there to pull him through.
He had not beaten doubts and fears
To lose his one true love anew.

And so he stayed there by her side
Though she had run when he had need.
He knew she needed strength to guide
Her back and he could do this deed.

For that whole day, he stayed close by.
He kept her warm and made her eat.
The fact that the girl did not die
Was enough to forbid defeat.

If she could eat and breathe and sigh,
Then she could return to his life.
He just had to stay right there by
Her side and help her with her strife.

After long hours holding her,
Sleep came and he could fight no more.
His sleeping love turned to a blur.
To lands of dreams did this man soar.

He dreamt he felt his lover's touch --
Her hand caressed his weathered cheek.
He smiled at her and felt her clutch
Him though her arms remained still weak.

His eyes opened. It was no dream.
The girl lay staring at his face.
After so long, he saw the gleam
Of her smile. She had found her place.

A noise disrupted their repose --
A tapping at the window pane.
Out of the bed the young man rose
To make the source of the sound plain.

He opened up the window wide.
The sun shone in upon the bed.
A bird flew in and gently cried --
The falcon which the girl had led.

The girl sat up and met the bird.
Her smile now did not seem so rare.
There seemed no need for spoken word.
All things they needed were right there.

And as they gazed across the snow
Regret was nowhere to be found.
Blizzards could rage and cold winds blow.
Together they were gladly bound.