

Rite of Passage
by William Lightfoot

for my friend, Brian...

[This poem, "Rite of Passage," was written for my fiancée's brother, a childhood friend. His sister, Brenda, and I helped him get into recovery three years ago and at the onset he was hospitalized for some time. I wrote it for him during that time to help him understand that I knew what he was going through, that I had been there too, and that I cared.]

The only way back to the other side,
Is through a swamp full of hell,
It's a wicked rollercoaster ride,
One that only the true can tell,

The bravest of men will try,
But only the strongest will prevail,
In a boxcar full of demons,
Racing on a slick and evil rail,

Their goal is but one,
To see you crumble, erode from the sane,
Piece by piece by piece,
Taking pleasure in your pain,

Now darkness never thought so deep,
Heavy as the moorish boots of lead,
Tread in unison upon your chest,
Pressing you deeper into dismal's bed,

The malignancy unbound, infinite in realm,
A void universe, a vast eternity to go,
Atmosphere so thick and stagnant,
Trudging the turbid waters below,

Through harrowing sallow days,
The blinding gloom is pressed,
By hands of bane, driven deep and hard,

Upon the fragile bone of breast,

Far deep out on the ebon seas,
The screams race through the night,
Delirium, Dementia seize the unbridled soul,
Talons of legions hold on gripping tight,

The beasts from within,
Wreak havoc on the mind,
While the quaking body shivers,
Struggling, always a step behind,

The hourglass of time,
Has split and shed its fill,
Outpour the sands of life,
So quick to sate the till,

Tears burn the sweating cheeks,
As the conscience delves to find,
A foothold in the sand,
A lever to break the bind,

But those who are convicted,
Full of truth and love,
Seek strength from the Almighty,
A power from above,

To survive this rite,
One can't imagine the pain,
Only those who have been tried,
Can see into the rain,

To step from the stygian train,
Into humble brace and cleansing light,
Where we still bear the scars,
Of this lonely, brutal fight,

A reminder to one's self,
And those who dare to listen,

That all roads taken or traveled,
Are not of gold nor even glisten.