

# One Short Hour

The tired, middle-aged man, slipped his worn overcoat off his thin shoulders and settled back in the plush seat. The heated auditorium felt good after being out in the cold snow. How kind it had been of his employer to give him a ticket to the concert! He loved music, but his wife would not permit him to waste his money for entertainment such as a music concert.

The music soothed him and made him forget all the troubles he had on his mind. All except one. He slipped a thin, gold watch from his pocket. He must not forget the time. Martha, his wife, would scold him if he came home after 9:30. He would have to get up in the middle of the concert and step on the toes of many people between him and the aisle. He was a timid type of person and did not like to attract attention.

Now they were playing a selection by Schubert. He looked at the hands of the watch again. It was a few minutes after nine. He then took his coat sleeve and polished the case of the watch. He was proud of his gold watch because it had been his grandfather's and was the only really nice thing he owned. He turned the watch in the palm of his hand. The gold back gave a glow to the reflection of his face, but he did not look happy. His hair was turning gray, and he had the burdens of the world on his heart.

A loud burst of music brought him back to reality. It was 9:15 and Martha would be wondering where he was and why he was staying out. For some strange reason he did not mind worrying her on this particular night because he was enjoying the concert. When he got home he would have to go hastily to bed to keep her from nagging him, and to keep her from complaining because he had been late.

Now they were playing a Rachmaninoff "Prelude." The program explained that it told a story of

a man who had been buried alive and who could hear the bells striking the hour. The man thought of how peaceful it would be to die, not to have to worry about working, about being home by 9:30, or about the cruel things which happened each day.

Nine-twenty. He placed his watch back in his pocket, and as he looked up a thousand lights caught his eye. It was the reflection of the chandelier which was in the dome of the auditorium directly above him. He again took his watch out of his pocket and turned it over and over in his hand. He was thinking of the many pieces of glass it must have taken to make the chandelier. The tiny crystals were tinkling as the music played. The man was thinking of the many symphonies the tinkling crystal ornaments must have caught through the passing years.

Then it happened. In a flash the whole chandelier seemed to be

By  
**Ethyleen Funk**

hurtling through space. A high note of music must have loosened the chandelier which was falling and tinkling in a blaze of light. And he would be in the path. Oh, how wonderful to die in such a way with music all around him, and with many people who would have a kind word to say for him. His thoughts were happy as he gave a loud cry. The glass was shattering in his ears. Then all was silent.

When the crowd drew back to let the doctor through, he announced that the man had died of a heart attack. The doctor wondered at the gold watch he held in his hand. The crystal had been shattered by a prism which had evidently fallen from the chandelier. The crowd stood by and wondered idly why he held the watch in his hand.

---

## Sun, Moon and Stars

To me you are the sun, whose fingertips  
Doth touch the lazy water as it glides,  
Who smiles to see the hidden fire  
That warmth and love can bring to view.

To me you are the moon, whose shining rays  
Give beauty to a meadow choked with weeds,  
Who lends her soft and gentle light  
To make the earth a lovely place.

To me you are the stars, whose steadfast eyes  
Are always clear and deep and full of truth,  
Who look on earth with changeless calm  
And keep earth's secrets in their depths.

To me you are the sun, the moon, the stars,  
Who breathe upon the world with bated breath,  
Who tell the world to look to them  
For guidance and celestial light.

—Margaret James.