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At the Gate of Heaven

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At the Gate of Heaven

*A la puerta del cielo venden zapatos
Para los angelitos que andan descalzos*

—lullaby*

Wince and tremble, take my place in line
to make my bargain; before me, Valiant-for-Truth;
behind me, Faust. I have done all I could
to earn the currency of the exchange.

You say you took us from commerce long ago.
I fear—I hold back pride, some small sins.
Then, when all my trying is not good enough,
I can say it was not my best effort, anyway.

Just in case,
I beat myself with many stripes, pay my own price.
The marks and scars I carry with me,
I inflicted: if I am not good enough,
maybe I will have suffered enough.

Enough to win through to some quiet place.
Enough, perhaps, to be healed.

*After this, it was noised abroad
that Mr. Valiant-for-Truth was taken with a summons
... “my marks and scars I carry with me to be
a witness for me, that I have fought his battles,
who now will be my rewarder.”
... So he passed over,
and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*

—Lisa Bolin Hawkins

* “At the gate of Heav’n, little shoes they are selling
For the little barefooted angels there dwelling.”

The italicized final lines are from John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.