

The Light Beyond the Door

by Cammie Corlas Quinn

One of my favorite Easter memories is only a few seconds long. Like a silent movie, it has no words. Nor does it have action. Yet, this memory has remained with me for almost fifty years.



I was about seven years old, looking out the back door of my parents' small-town home on Easter Sunday morning in the 1960s. We were preparing to pile into our station wagon to attend the Easter morning service. I was the oldest of four children (later there would be six of us), and in assembly-line fashion, I had already come off the line in my Easter dress, white bonnet, patent leather shoes, and a shiny plastic purse. Behind me, the usual turmoil was in progress. My mom was brushing one of my siblings' hair, my dad was searching for a lost shoe, and a cat was licking spilt milk on the kitchen counter.

Meanwhile, I was idly gazing out the back door of our kitchen—one of those glass doors with the family initial ensconced in the middle. Bright sunlight was streaming in on me. I can't recall what I saw outside the door—only sunlight and the fresh green of spring. I felt special, wearing new Easter clothes my mother had sewn for me. The sun felt warm on my skin, as if I were being swaddled in an infant's fleece blanket. It was one of those rare, perfect moments when you feel suspended, carried by a sense of well-being. With my family behind me and the sunlight streaming through the door in front of me, I was surrounded by love and light.

Fifty years have passed. Challenges have come, as they do to every life. The most grievous challenges have come in the form of deaths. My father, who had searched for the lost Easter shoe, died on a hospital bed from a mysterious attack of hepatitis. My mother, who had sewn my Easter dress, died of cancer in her living room while her grown children surrounded her. Favorite teachers have died, as well as classmates, friends, and relatives. I have watched a beloved pet suffer a heart attack on the veterinarian's steel table. I have shed tears when my car hit a colorful pheasant and when I found a dead coyote in a field after a harsh winter. During these fifty years, death has oppressed me with its lengthening shadows and its haunting darkness.

Recently, after pondering another death, it dawned upon me why my plotless Easter memory has always been so special to me. I realized that I have been waiting behind that door all my life, looking through the glass at the shaft of light. I realized that I have never really been on the *inside* of the door at all; rather, the whole time I've been on the *outside* looking in.

Now, while life decays behind me, the sun's rays wax brilliant through the glass and the door is loosening on its hinges. One day that door will open and I will walk through it into my true Home, into glorious light where death will not pass through after me. I will stroll amid the mysteries inside the light that my child eyes could not see from behind the door. I have a great hope of seeing my mother and father and the others whose deaths I'd mourned. Best of all, I will see the One who sewed me together in the womb, who numbered the hairs on my head, and who went to the cross without any shoes at all.

How good God is to give a young child a profound picture of resurrection, tuck it inside her memory between weddings and childbirths and careers, only to sharpen it into focus in the waning years before the door yawns open to the light.

...He [Jesus] rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." (Luke 10:21 ESV)