

Florian's Gate
By Dominicus Jack

To Tim

You see it, far off and you're almost 63 years old but that is not old yet for your hair is hardly grey and the mountain will always call you back—
Even though the journey will cost you many toe nails and perhaps some skin.

You see it, far off and you're envious of the mist that lives around the base of your mistress—
For every time you sit at the window and you enjoy the view from the port hole that United, Southwest, KLM or some other obscure airways has granted you.

You see it, not so far as it once was, for now you are looking up and the sun is so bright that the mountain glares into the sky and it is hard to differentiate the two—
And with the sun comes other illusions whether perceived as such or merely imagined and perceived as real, you think you see, high ahead, a gate, a foreign structure, gothic in appearance and yet not so much like the Reims Cathedral, which is French and not to your liking—
This structure, real or imagined, is of a respectable sort and you know once at the top you will find it to be a rather large figment of your imagination.

You see it, closer now, and now you wonder why it has not gone away, no others on the rope have asked about it and you are still unsure if broaching the subject is to your liking
—

And you are able to make out markings; the most significant of them is the small spire on top, perhaps copper which has been greened by weather or perhaps not—
Now you know, within hours you will be there, though the imagined structure should not be visible, for it was viewed from down below Camp Muir and now you are far above the Ingraham Flats and the thing in question should be out of sight, if it is truly there; but there it is, nonetheless.

You see it, and others see it as well and exclaim and you are reminded of 2001: A Space Odyssey, what is a gate such as this doing on such a summit—it is rather like the obelisk of your dreams yet, it is a gate, one that you will later find to be Florian's Gate from Krakow, Poland.

With intricate stone and brick work otherwise known as Wild Stone, though there is nothing wild about it; it is purely Gothic styling, though not like the Reims Cathedral, but

the color scheme of grey and red is rather nice, you decide and it is a favorable addition to the mountain as Prince Leszek II, The Black may or may not have wanted, he had built it to help protect the city from Turkish attack though that was in the 1200s and the Turkish are known to be somewhat more peaceful now.

People are reluctant to approach it though some have touched it, as it sits without pretence in the middle of the crater, but you are not afraid and walk through the gate many times and feel as if one side presents a dream to you, though nothing has changed, and the other side, the original side, a hard cold reality that is the reason for your meditation and participation with the Quakers and also the reason you find yourself in a cold, windy place, on the top of the world which few people experience but where you feel most natural.

The dream is simply that: a dream, one in which you could live forever, though it would not change for you and you possesses no power to alter it.

So once more you duck through the gate one last time, Florian's Gate. And you feel more awake and alive, yet will not live forever, but that, you know as well as anyone, is part of life: the leaving, and have been doing just that for many years, for it saves on introductions though goodbyes have never been your forte, you have known that for a long time, as everyone is graced upon your arrival, glad of your presence and sad to see you go; but you know, that it is not goodbye, but merely a parting that has happened many times before and will, many times again, so you are not sad; for you say goodbye to the mountain, yet know it will be there when you come back, waiting for your return.