

THE CLOCK ON THE WALL

By Bill Barnes

Prologue: This poem is about the writer's experience of working third shift in the canteen at Central Prison in Raleigh while, down the hall a hundred yards, a human life was being deliberately taken.

You feel the anguished spirits
of the many whose flames
have been extinguished
In this charnel house before
In some vain, forlorn attempt
to even some earthly score.

And then you stare
At the clock on the wall

Its hands are moving all-too-quickly
Yet its hands are moving oh-so-dreadfully slow
It's a countdown to eternity
For yet another poor soul

The spirits are on you now
They've been there all along
But now your soul can hear so clearly
Their awful, anguished song

And with dread wonder
You see another minute has tolled
On the clock upon the wall

There *is* no spirit of light
No, not here tonight
The Prince of Darkness laughs upon his throne
And the clock upon the wall says:
Another minute has gone

This is the focal point
The nexus of many evil roads
And ~~you~~^{you're} afraid soon another soul will slip
Into the Prince's dark abode

And the clock upon the wall
Informs us there's only seven more to go...

All the evil things you've seen
Memories you've tried hard to leave behind
All come flooding back in
Weighing heavily upon your troubled mind...

But now the clock says there's just six
Six more minutes to go
And if it's hurting you like this
What God-awful anguish does the condemned
man know?

There's a trauma in the nether world
Turmoil behind the veil
And yet again you hear
The tormented spirits' anguished wails

What went awry in a young child's life?
What went so terribly, terribly wrong?
That soon his life will grimly end
Behind these walls of stone?

And now the clock says
There's only five
300 more seconds
For this young man to stay alive...

God does not wish this
This much you know
Does not wish his children to strike
Yet another deadly blow

But the clock says there's only four,
Four more minutes to go...

You wonder what stage they're at
Is the needle in yet?
It's still more of the Devil's work
That wicked man begets...

And they've planned it all
Planned it out so well
Practised and rehearsed
All the death dance's tiniest details

And then you stare
At the clock on the wall
There's only three more to go...

They're doing *what* down the hall?!
They're *killing* someone?!
Yet another senseless act
In a "war" that cannot be won..?

You wonder how mere mortals dare hurl at
God
Such a blasphemous insult
My God, who's got me here
Some Satanic cult..?

For they've carefully planned
They've premeditated long and well
So what hideous demons
In their own hearts dwell?

And now the clock says
There's only two...
And, my God, my brother
If the waiting's doing this to *me*
I cannot imagine what it's doing to *you*...

And I do not know you
But I'm sure you were poor
For the rich are never chosen
To darken death house doors

All human sacrifices
Are selected strictly from those short of purse
For since you have no cash to pay your debt
Then your life will serve to reimburse...

Well, the crowd will soon be here
Hungry after a hard night's work
"Protecting society" is a duty these good folks
Shall surely never shirk...

They'll buy nabs and cookies
Sandwiches and drinks
I've noticed before that doing this tasteless task
Has never made their stomachs shrink...

And the clock on the wall says
We're down to one
Soon the barbaric act
Will be forever done

And the lost souls cry
For this gruesome ~~deed~~ *deed*
Since the Savior's teachings
Earthly leaders refuse to ~~heed~~ *heed*

And why must politicians' votes
Be purchased with blood?
Does taking another poor man's life
Really strike a blow for the forces of good?

For who are they to judge?
Who are they to override?
That which surely
Only God can justly decide...

And now the clock on the wall
Says nothing at all

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Epilogue: I note, in passing, that during this century, at least 23 Americans were executed who were later proven to have been innocent. But, it was, of course, a little late at that point... Also, since 1973, nearly 80 death row inmates have been freed after retrials in which they were acquitted.

➤ The number of condemned Americans is fast approaching 4,000.

PS: Bill Barnes, an inmate in North Carolina, is not on death row yet he feels the horror of "death row". Bill wrote that this is his way of helping to educate the people about the death penalty and won third place in a local writing competition with this poem. He hopes that "we" will use his poem in our work.

www.PrisonFoundation.org & GoFundMe.com/manage/inmate-needs-assistance