

# 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*.