

MARY BARNES

Pulling Down

Through a small hole
in the vestibule ceiling
the thick-woven dusty rope
hung heavy,
silent and stoic
as it had for fifty years.

We boys studied it every Sunday
peering upward, imagining
what we could not see,
the iron mechanism
at the top of the fat old cord,
and bragged to each other
that our strength
would be more than enough.
But we'd been strictly forbidden
ever to touch it for
only the deacon
had authority to reverence,
three times pulling,
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Today I purchased
a little reading light
seven dollars only,
too cheap for switch or button.

Tonight I pulled down the tiny knob
at the end of its delicate
four-inch chain
and heard the church bell ring.



ABOUT MARY BARNES

Mary Barnes is the author of *Rounded Corners, Burnished Edges* (Colley Avenue Print 2016), and her work has appeared in the *Connecticut River Review* and *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*. She received a master's degree in music from Northwestern University. A musician and transcriptionist, she lives in Portsmouth, Virginia. She is a member of the Poetry Society of Virginia.

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