



Light; photo, Wikimedia Commons

KISSED BY THREE WOMEN AT THE BLUE MOSQUE

MARY ANN KONARZEWSKI

*Light illumines the stained glass,
resplendent with blues,
color of peace,
golds and white interwoven,
white birds with outspread wings
send a message of love,
silently
perching within leafy flowers and vines.*

*I watch the congregation of men at the center . . .
praying
prostrating
foreheads touching in unison the richly patterned rug,
gathering the strength of Allah's command.*

Mary Ann Konarzewski is a massage therapist, elder care specialist, writer, and poet. She has written a screenplay entitled Songs of Silence, about Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, a 17th century nun, feminist, poet, and scholar. Recently, she has finished a collection of short stories entitled Reaping the Light: Stories of Love, Inspiration and Wisdom at the End of Life.

*What is the voice they hear
inside themselves?*

*My eyes catch sight of the women,
heads covered, some veiled in black,
sitting separately in the back.*

My glance goes back to the men.

*I close my eyes,
the light from the glass remains
a vision within.
I pray.*

*La ilaha ilallah. La ilaha ilallah.
La ilaha ilallah.*

*La ilaha ilallah. La ilaha ilallah.
La ilaha ilallah.*

. . .

*In thankfulness
I rise, bow my covered head
and hear a voice.
Three women rush over to me.
I cannot see them.
They are covered in burkas.*

*One holds a small black gift in her hands. . .
the Koran.
“Please take,”
she says with a gleam of excitement
and love
flashing from her dark diamond eyes.*

Their very presence fills me with warmth.

*“This is our gift to you,”
they say in unison, “please take.”*

*What do they want,
is it money?*

*Silence permeates as they
drink me in with their smiling eyes
that give me the answer.*

*They want nothing.
It is the gift they bring.*

*One woman draws the black cloth
from her face,
revealing her naked vulnerability,
youthful and pretty
resplendent with joyful exuberance –
perhaps the thought came to her that I,
a stranger, am visiting their holy place,
let us give her a gift.*

*She points her delicate white finger
to a section of the Koran.
“Miriam, Miriam,” she exclaims
in a whisper.
“Read, you must,” the others smile and say,
all hovering close to me.*

*She places the marker there,
then points to Miriam’s section
in the mosque.*

*I do not know what the words mean
but the women are exuberant.*

*The other two draw the black cloth away
and smile rosily.
“Miriam,” they whisper. “Miriam.”
“My name is Miriam,” I say.
A pause of silence passes with the presence
of God’s holy breath,
like rose petals falling--sweet, soft
and fragrant.
They look at one another
with eyes widening in wonder.*

*“Miriam?” one asks, followed by the other two,
as if to say did we hear it correctly?
“Miriam,” I nod. “My name is Miriam.”
“Miriam,” they all repeat excitedly, moving closer,
“You, Miriam.”*

*I nod my head in affirmation.
Waves of enthusiasm spread among them,
as if at any moment they will jump up and down
in a dance of glee, of Yes, Miriam, praise be to Miriam.
They reach out to hug and kiss me.
I peck one of the women on the lips.
The other two laugh.*

*“I will show you. The Turkish way. Like this.”
She takes her two hands to embrace me,
presses her cheek to mine, then to the other.
Smiling, she giggles as the other two do the same.*

*The light streams through the glass
illuminating the world of the men at the center
but here is another world
outside the roped off area
separating men from women
and stranger from friend.*

*It is the world of these women
who know love deep in the heart
who understand what it was like in the beginning
before there was separation and division.*

Without language they embrace and unite.

*As the birds with outspread wings
flutter in the blue glass
resplendent with light. . .
I close my eyes and remember the vision.*

