From the Associated Press

Stranded in Mountain Snow, Woman Dances for Her Life

LAYTON, Utah — When Karen Hartley found herself stranded in freezing temperatures and mountain snow as night fell, she knew it was either dance or die.

So she danced in the dark by herself, playing remembered tunes in her head until dawn, when rescuers spotted her from a search helicopter. She was unhurt and spent Christmas Day in a hot tub, followed by dinner at Denny's.

Hartley, a 33-year-old computer software developer, had wandered outside the Powder Mountain ski area on Christmas Eve and spent more than 18 hours, cold and alone, on the mountain. The temperatures were in the single digits.

"The best thing I could think of was to keep my brain occupied by playing music in my head and dancing to it to keep warm," Hartley said Friday. "I went through all the old disco songs, show tunes, popular and current stuff, Christmas tunes and even camp songs I'd ever known."

Karen Hartley danced her way
Through the darkness of night
And bone-chilling cold until she was rescued.
I have a friend, Pastor Hailue from Ethiopia
   Who, along with his colleagues
      In anticipation of being arrested and incarcerated
         For their Christian faith

Divided and memorized the entire New Testament.

In prison, during the long hours of the night
   They would take turns reciting whole books of the Bible

Their voices echoing down the halls of the prison
   Offering hope, not only to the Christians there
      But to the many non-believers
         Who became believers as a result.

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It is believed, Horatio Spafford composed
   His world-renowned hymn, our last hymn
      *When Peace Like a River*

As his own vessel sailed over the exact waters
   His four daughters perished in
      When their ship sank in the North Atlantic.

Spafford sang over and over through his darkest night
   Those words in the hymn’s refrain
      *It is well, it is well . . . with my soul.*

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Many might have given up
   Had they been Karen Hartley
      And just curl up in the snow to die.
Many would have despaired in the prison cells of Ethiopia

But there are those whose rugged faith
  Keeps them going through periods of darkness.

Another example of this is today’s passage from Acts.

Paul and Silas were arrested for disturbing the peace
  In the city of Philippi
  By preaching the gospel in the marketplace.

They were beaten and thrown in prison.

They were in the deepest and darkest part of the prison.

Now you might think the two missionaries
  Might reconsider their call
  And ponder an early retirement.

Instead our passage informs us that about midnight
  Paul and Silas were heard
  Singing hymns at the top of their lungs!

Praying and singing so loud
  No one was getting any sleep!

When suddenly there was an earthquake
  So strong it rattled the doors open
  And shook the jail so hard
  Even the ankles chains fell off their feet.
The jailer, beside himself with fear that all had escaped
Prepared to kill himself rather than face his superiors.

When Paul cried out to the jailor not to harm himself
That in fact, they were all still there!

So amazed was he that he set them all free
Brought them to his own home
And fed them all a midnight snack!

And humbled by the experience
He asked how he might be saved.

And Paul and Silas replied,
“Believe in the Lord Jesus.”

Then he and his household were
Every single one of them
From the oldest to the youngest
Baptized in the name of Jesus.

All this, the results of Paul and Silas
Praying and singing through the night.

We can’t necessarily expect that to happen
Every time we sing, pray, and dance
Through the darkness of an hour.

However, such a thing has helped lessen the burdens
That life can place on you.
Many a night was passed
    By the early African slaves
    By singing, praying and dancing through the night.

It helped make the load a little lighter
    And the day a little brighter!

Martin Luther King Jr
    Whose 50th anniversary of his assassination
    Is recognized this year

Said in his sermon, *A Knock at Midnight*:

*Our eternal message of hope is that dawn will come. Our slave fore-parents saw this. They were mindful of the fact of midnight. For always there was the whip of the overseer and the auction block where families were torn asunder to remind them of its reality.*

*When they thought of the agonizing darkness of midnight they sang:*

    *Oh nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen*
    *Glory Hallelujah!*
    *Sometimes I’m up, sometimes I’m down*
    *Oh yes, Lord.*
    *Sometimes I’m almost to de groun’,*
    *Oh yes, Lord.*
    *Oh nobody knows de trouble I’ve seen*
    *Glory Hallelujah.*

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When darkness falls upon our lives
   And it will . . .

Financial disaster, loss of a loved one
   Health issues, injustices placed upon our lives

We have two choices before us.

We can sink down in despair
   And curl up in the snow and freeze to death.

We can be apathetic, give up
   And not fight the chains that bind us . . .

Or we can fight against what keeps us in prison.

Paul and Silas did not give up . . .

Neither did Karen Hartley or Hailue.

We can do what they did,
   Sing, and pray, and dance through our midnights!

Again from his sermon, *A Knock at Midnight*:

*Encompassed by a staggering midnight but believing that morning would come, they sang,*

   I’m so glad trouble don’t last always
   Oh my Lord, oh my Lord, what shall I do?

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When confronted with the obstacles life presents
    Whatever problem, disappointment, injustice
    There might be in your life . . .

Roll with the punches . . .
    Wrestle with the angel . . .
    Don’t give up . . .

Believe that all things will work for good
    For those who love God and seek his purpose.

There will be times when hardships come.

When trouble straps its shackles around you;

Like Paul and Silas
    With chains around your ankles
    Locked behind your prison doors

Like Karen Hartley
    Staring subzero temperatures of a long night ahead

Like Hailue, facing persecution
    Or Spafford facing tremendous loss

What will you do?

Sing! Dance! Shout with courage in the face of the night.

Martin Luther King Jr: *Their positive belief in the dawn was the growing edge of hope that kept the slaves faithful amid the most barren and tragic circumstances.*
*Faith in the dawn arises from the faith that God is good and just . . . Even the most starless midnight may herald the dawn of some great fulfillment.*

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These are the images we have . . .

In the pitch black darkness
   In the bowels of a prison cell

Their feet bound in chains
   Their backs open wounds
      We find Paul and Silas singing!

On a snowy mountaintop chilled to the bone
   We find Karen Hartley dancing the night away!

Incarcerated in Ethiopia,
   Hailue recites verse after verse of Scripture!

On a moonless night in the North Atlantic
   Horatio Spafford chanting the words, *it is well.*

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It has been said
   That the darkest hour is just before dawn.

And so remember,
   The darker the hour the closer to dawn.

Keep the faith . . .

Pray, sing, and dance through the darkness of your night
   Your dawn is coming . . .