

The Spacecraft*

Once upon a deadline dreary, as I pondered, weak and weary,
Over a quaint and curious timeline (always a distressing chore).
While my fingers keys were tapping, suddenly there came a rapping,
"Me thinks there's someone gently rapping, rapping at my office door."
"Tis the janitor," I muttered, "tapping at my office door-
Only this and nothing more."

But I was wrong, as there instead, I saw a long familiar head,
Belonging to a mission ops team member standing at my door.
Face of ashen grey was gazing as my blood pressure was raising,
As his lips the words were forming, slowly coming to the fore,
"It's the wheel," he murmured softly, standing just outside my door.
"Looks like a long night in store."

Down the hall we raced with yearning, all the time our thoughts were churning,
'Til we reached the window looking to a room with raised floor.
Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing,
Doubting, thinking thoughts that none of us had dared to think before.
"Could this be the end?" I wondered, standing there outside the door.
Still a thought that I deplore.

Entered I into the chamber where the engineers did battle
With the aging satellite that all our future hopes still bore.
"Can you fix it, get it spinning? Heat it, cool it, change the pointing?
Anything to keep it going, letting us to still explore?"
This and other words I used, the engineers to thus implore.
But they answered, "Nevermore!"

And that spacecraft, never pointing, still is spinning, still is spinning
In its orbit round the earth, an orbit set in days of yore.
NORAD now is all that tracks us; Thinks we're good for target practice.
But did we as time allowed us all our efforts to outpour.
Now we all must look ahead to sense and cypher what's in store,
For the FUSE team is no more.

*Read in a manner similar to "The Raven," with apologies to Edgar Allen Poe.
(Composed by Bill Blair for the FUSE 10th anniversary, June 24, 2009.)