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**THE POET AND THE CRIPPLE**

They would never understand how, in April,

Confident and young

He had been led to lead the crippled girl

Underneath the shedding blossoms;

Nor would she afterwards, except as her testimony

To the court subscribers

Phrased the violation of the flowers,

Come upon the need or the knowing.

There was suddenly inexplicable brutality

In a soft and honeyed weather

And the bruise upon her body

Overwhelmed her memory.

Something strange and perverse

Deferred her deformity

Though over his urgent possessing shoulder

Her eyes fractured against the blossoms.

It was not only his darkness that seized her mouth

As he was turning to the earth beneath her

But that he had forgotten or been unable to feel

The petals that fell upon him.

They would never understand

How April could be so abused

And congruity violated in a pleasing season:

For the sake of a Spring and a passion

He had gone, they would say, to the devil.

They would never understand the charity

Of the heart to itself.

**Robert Gajdusek**

**THE MAN WHO GRIEVED FOR GOD**

*At last, my Christ has gone to bed:*

he sprang the catchword since he bled  
the berry on our thorn of truth.

Allowing some leftover pain  
which haunted him, and would again,  
he shrouded his anemic youth.

With Christ so tired and so asleep,  
now he could fret, or even weep  
as sometimes tougher men will do;  
he could revise theology  
a little, though eternity  
was still a primer for review.

But glossing God was his mistake  
which grazed the bones and made them shake.  
At most a fly-by-night relief  
was all the intellect dare claim  
in awkwardly engrafting shame  
that rotted to a husk of grief.

With Christ unstirring, night was long  
as wintertime, and bare of song.  
The sounds were sharp enough to slice  
a door, and he could set no lock  
to stem the triple-crowing cock  
or hush a soldier's clacking dice.

In shadow he must try to hide  
(though Christ might toss against his side).  
He troubled no one with his sighs,  
but when a cracking lance of breath  
suggested his (or God's) own death  
he chilled, and almost said, *Arise*.

**Raymond Roseliep**

## LITTLE BELL

This bell is too small  
to herald the coming of a king,  
but big enough to know under what stone  
right answers are buried.

Ten-toothed and open-mouthed,  
it sings of Indra and of Siva,  
with sweet breath and soft brass words  
like: natya, nrtya, and nrta.

Little bell, I said, Tell me  
how high the soul leaps  
when the bones are unjointed one by one  
and left to whiten on uncircled sand?

There was almost no sound,  
as if an elephant was walking on marble  
or a mouse was climbing a pagoda.  
But the bell sat on its tongue,  
as if it were afraid a cat would get it.

Listen to me, little bell, I said,  
and shook it to enliven its overtones,  
I want to believe how high the soul leaps  
and what happens to the silhouette.

Breath came,  
and the bell sang of Indra and of Siva,  
with sweet breath and soft brass words  
like: natya, nrtya, and nrta;  
(which neither the gravity-minded world,  
nor the tormented night, nor I,  
could understand)  
then sat on its tongue,  
as if it were afraid a cat would get it.

There was a beating of too-much drum

and the house lights dimmed  
as I gathered the little bell  
and hurtled it as high as the soul leaps  
when the bones are unjointed one by one  
and left to whiten on uncircled sand.

And, on whatever is left untouched.

**Parm Mayer**

## **SURVIVOR**

Now I remember nothing but snow blown  
over runways after chocks released the wheels  
while throttles spun four stopped propellers one  
by one into four arcs and blurs of steel . . .  
Plateaus receded underneath the wings  
like shores withdrawing in a clipper's wake.  
Lakes lidded with ice opaque as paraffin  
diminished downward as I watched quick flakes  
of snow

and frost congealing on the cockpit glass  
or swirling back into the slipstream night.  
I saw the motors flare blue jets of gas  
below the ailerons until the lights  
at each dihedral-tip revealed high peaks  
too near to be avoided and a wall  
of rock that split the fuselage like flak  
before we crashed and vanished in a pall  
of snow.

**Samuel Hazo**

## THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

## 1.

God was first a dog and loving him  
As much a sport as ball or rolling down  
A hill to see the worlds go spin around—  
The latest sun to throw a galaxy.  
His eyes were blameless dead under your hands  
And with his tongue he licked away the fat  
Of womb to shape a scrappy son of God,  
A secret playmate of the balls of heaven.

Grinding your teeth at fathers in their towers,  
Whitened faces in the wine, and mothers,  
Hiding from their men, behind the looms—  
Left to wilder into namelessness—  
How you came to praise these bitter ferns!  
Until what woke, snarled, snapped at your belt?  
An old shepherd dog come out of the wood  
To eat your rage and warm your loins with fur.

His doggy shape domesticated fire,  
Made you family to the sparks of night,  
The sighs beneath the boughs, a smiler to stars,  
And under an igloo sheet in the midnight sun,  
He played at Eskimo with a cold nose,  
Harpooned you, skewered and turned you above the  
flames,

Making you sing: O fire, me, the young rider!  
Alive at last and kinsman to my father!

## 2.

But Paris grew a foot and turned away  
From fabled woods and ghosts at the mirror lake;  
The black bread of shepherds began to stale.  
His heart demanded touch of Priam's beard

In kiss of lineage or another king,  
Ichor-veined, or was it what the wind  
One day said he could be? So down to Troy,  
Freighted with a soul of skinny birds  
And croaker frogs to sell there in a plaza  
Where good flesh is dear. The traders laughed  
To see the way he held his cages high:  
"Ho boy, let's see 'em, touch 'em before we buy!"

So all the holes within him opened up  
And pigeons flew with messages for kings  
Among the vats and baskets by the gates,  
Where every fruit was bruised, each thumb  
grape-stained,

And yet the ogre fed and called for more:  
For snow, for mead, for what the city's tariff  
Choked and burned outside the city's walls,  
And the lad sickened to see men work at God,  
Laying populations as a plank  
So that the modish deity could stroll  
Down boulevards of quiet symmetry:  
A god who picked at night in garbage pails  
Or wept at all that slithered down the drain.  
A god of double cross, a god in two,  
A god afoot to find his other face!  
So did men pay for cenotaphs and peace,  
Hoarding the tarnished gold picked in a war  
With brother self no victory could claim,  
And into Paris tramped the veterans  
Who knew a leg or finger when they saw one  
Waiting to be used on peg or stump.  
Then Paris called for God to fill him up  
Because he saw that now he was half-made,  
A slave with open mouth before his Lord  
Or one back-turned to bear his might behind.  
And God was a Russian bondsman pummeling stones

Into a street. Across the gutter there,  
What envy shook these two aristocrats,  
What admiring pity that so held them  
In hot vibrato between two magnet horns?  
One City fell and rose upon that sight  
In hopeless dream that could not last the night.

## 3.

She found him broken by the two  
That never would be one  
And so she taught him love  
By number three:  
A cave where buried hope would grow,  
Two springs where infant joy could feed  
To climb beyond the slough.

But God and I were one, he cried.

Be still, my love,

A home, a love,

A work is what you need to do.

But I must wrestle with my God:

I must take him, he must take me,

Old Priam cannot long deny his blood.

Others will be,

Others will be,

Her whispers swelling into echoes,

Let a holy trinity

Shape, define, and comfort you.

*Hausfrau!* Witch!

You steal the cream

Wrought from my pains and dreams

To churn a common butter

For rotting banquet boards.

Let cities fall

If men cannot be lovers.

O flesh that would be God!  
O man made dumb and mad  
By holiest dream  
Of man's nobility!

Either the two be one  
Or else will there be none.

The world is never turned by twos  
But three.

Then what of me and history,  
Am I of no account,  
Never ends, merely means,  
Holding breath on mere caprice  
Out of smashing eggs with worms?  
My will no more than testaments  
Written on my guttering bones?

Come make your peace  
Not with a one or two  
But three.

You cannot leap into Ptolemy's mirrors  
Or wear as jewels the Hapsburg pox.

But turn,  
Turn, O love,  
To the wild life beyond  
These chartered waves.  
Hitch a new spring  
To these winter loins  
And bring—

Wars and rage!  
Bodies fit for birds and dogs,  
While shades moan at the gates.  
Your three's a wheel of Jagannath,  
Balabhadra and Subhadra.

My wheel's the only ride to hope  
For fathers and sons,  
Enemies and lovers,  
Who kill each other with hate and love.  
Rape a maid, if rape you will,  
And I will grant you history,  
For just the apple, please,  
To show that I am right.  
And Paris sailed to Sparta  
Out of spite.

Gerard G. Brissette

## VACUUM

AS under bell-jar the stridently clattering  
alarm-clock's rage dulls to a tinny  
buzz, and silence (save sibilance  
of air-pump) dead to a deaf sense,  
though beneath the exhausted dome the tiny  
hammer is furiously soundlessly continuously beating,

SO after violence—

hand come bloody away from  
belly; wheels still stupidly revolving;  
soft echoes of detonation blundering  
about—is suddenly nothing,  
in that peculiar silence,

to breathe: nothing to do: under the glass dome  
all is unmoving, unbreathing  
(save a frantic unheard clattering:  
the heart furiously soundlessly continuously beating).

Tim Reynolds

## A RIVER IS NAMED

*" . . . and one of the conquistadores, Don Luis Ar-  
guello, striking east from the Pueblo de San Fran-  
cisco in quest of gold, glory, and the souls of men,  
came upon a river along which a myriad of birds  
nested in the lofty cliffs."*

The day ends  
when my armor chills  
and my skin shrinks from the wet leather.  
We marched against the sun all day  
through hills like smooth brown buttocks  
with the fine dark hair of little fir trees  
in the crotches of the slopes . . .  
Damn the image! We are gone many days,  
and my loins ache . . .

This is high country now,  
the peaks lifted with spruce,  
the open saddles brush-choked  
with bushes of strange red bark, pale leaves,  
and fibrous wood tough enough  
to blunt good Spanish steel.  
In the dark declivities  
ferns dampen the red earth.  
The river here is cold even in the shallows  
and tasteless with purity.

We camp tonight  
on a beach of big gravel,  
smooth eggs spawned by the hissing serpent-stream,  
but dark, slimed with flung spray.  
There is a rubble of rock  
out of the mountain behind us,  
a tailing chalked and whited like a mound of skulls.  
I think of this valley as an alien serpent's den—

cold, moss-smeared, wet with green juice.  
My head aches from my helmet  
and the ceaseless noise of water  
smashed like bottle glass  
against the tilted black teeth of the river . . .  
My armor will have rusted by morning . . .  
I miss the hot plains and the easy dust.

I walk down to the stream through the heavy pines.  
They shake me.  
They are so upright, so full of green calm,  
like the admonishing fingers of God . . .  
I stand in the long brown grass  
near an eddy  
watching a rose-blue sunset film the water . . .  
Flecks of solid color float the pool.  
I stoop and catch some. Mother of God!  
Here are feathers!  
The river is breasted like a wild pigeon—  
white, gold, rose, blue, gray—  
delicate filaments of the darkening sky,  
a molting of fallen angels!

Tomorrow  
we will break camp early,  
cross the plumed water,  
and ascend these twisted hills.  
There can be no gold here,  
not even of the sun.  
Too much of the beauty of darkness  
is here,  
along this—River of the Feathers.

**Richard Curry Esler**