

The Hermit in the Woods

We children, often when the sun dips low,
Will laugh and shove each other toward The Green-
A verdant graveyard, where no light will go,
To find the Hermit, whom no man has seen.

As dusk alights and stains the nettles black,
Each child present creeps into the wood.
In every bramble waits the Hermit's Sack,
In canopy above- look there!- His Hood!

*A man who likens helpless babes to prey-
A famished man, or so the stories say.*

With burlap Sack, He hunts along the brush,
With crooked Nose, He smells your acrid fears!
A twig- it *snaps!*- we scatter in a rush,
The Hermit (quickly, run, Oh God), He nears!

His branch-like fingers claw my neck and cheeks,
His root-like feet, they toss me to my knees.
I feel within me, *I'm* the one he seeks,
That vicious shade who tracks me through the trees.

*A man who sneers at brazen beams of day-
A shadow man, or so the stories say.*

My lungs, they burn, and tears, they sting my eyes,
A pool of molten fear's replaced my spine.
Go, run now, faster, wait!- To my surprise,
I find a hidden grove amongst the pine.

Between the moonlit trees, a cabin sags
Before me, like a carpet worn and frayed.
A work of finery reduced to rags,
Like man whose time had run, yet still he stayed.

*A man who covets dregs oft cast away-
A greedy man, or so the stories say.*

Thick ivy vines ensnare the cobble walls
Like creature trapped within a silvered net.
Along the stones, the rising moonlight crawls
And casts upon them fearsome silhouette!

I squeeze my eyes, yet tears flow through them still;
I feel them dripping down to grass below.

With thudding heart, I claw against the chill
And turn to face the object of my woe.

*A man with blood-wet teeth and beard of grey-
A rabid man, or so the stories say.*

Behind me, drenched in waterfall of light,
An Angel kneels upon a mossy plinth.
Cascading down her face in streams of white,
The pools illumine a bed of hyacinth.

The statue, with her hands outstretched aloft,
And tender smile half-hidden 'neath her hair,
She coos the jagged, nettled shadows soft
And muddles me, until my soul lays bare.

*A man who cloaks himself in lunar ray-
A ragged man, or so the stories say.*

Bewitched as I am by the Angel's poise,
With muted ears, I hear a muted sound-
While slow to act, I scarcely make a noise
As staggered footsteps crunch upon the ground!

An ancient pine, a sentinel of old
Enshrouds me and enfolds me into black,
Obscuring me from Hooded gaze so cold,
And claws that clutch a lumpy, burlap Sack.

*.A man whom godly solace finds no sway-
A faithless man, or so the stories say.*

I spy him hobble toward that sacred place
And, with a grunt, bequeath his heavy prize.
Down goes his patchwork Hood, and up his face
To stare with sunken set of Hunter's eyes.

The Hermit carves His talons through a nest
Of tangled, matted hair, like mindless vines.
A dry and strangled sigh escapes His chest
And shatters twilight silence of the pines.

*A man with no emotions to convey-
A wooden man, or so the stories say.*

Into His Sack those bloodied claws reach deep
(Though I attempt to swallow back my fear,
That cloying dizziness resumes its creep),

And set amongst the hyacinths... a pear.

A smallish fruit with largish stem, it mocks
Me, resting 'pon its throne of petaled grace.
Who would believe that clever Hermit-Fox
With pear, could corpse so stealthily replace?

*A man who brokered promise to the Fae-
A cunning man, or so the stories say.*

Behind my barken screen I watch Him shred
Apart that silver fruit with gnashing teeth.
With equal measure fill me, peace and dread;
That Angel whole and tattered Fiend beneath.

As if the sight repels me, back I stride
And to good Angel whisper silent plea.
Ignored at once, the Hermit's eyes grow wide
My breath stands still- our gazes meet- I flee!

*A man who stalks the weak with no delay-
A savage man, or so the stories say.*

Not caring for the pinecones 'neath my feet
Nor for the briar-arms that snag my hair,
I run until the golden tree trunks meet
The gentle, rolling grass of Valley fair.

Emboldened by the gilded light of dawn,
I chance a glance back toward that frightful Wood,
To ascertain the truth- that He is gone
And with Him, burlap Sack and patchwork Hood.

*A man who leads good, kindly folk astray-
A vengeful man, or so the stories say.*

The Valley bows to Time (as do we all),
Yet never shall my mind let me forget
That frigid night: the Angel's gleaming shawl,
His hyacinths and face, its lines deep-set.

Our children, often when the sun dips low,
Will laugh and shove each other toward The Green-
A verdant graveyard, where no light will go,
To find the Hermit, whom no man has seen.

*A man on whom such heavy burdens lay-
A lonely man- that, only I can say.*

Dandelions

Last night, adrift and loose with sleep
I dreamt an endless field of sheep
Sat swaying on long, em'rald stems,
Adorned in white like woolen gems.

And I, a giant in this dream,
Did bend my knee upon the green
And pluck a little, budding lamb
Despite the bleats of ewe and ram.

I raised the fluffy flower to
My lips; with all my strength I blew
And watched the wayward tufts of white
Begin their gentle, airborne flight.

The lamb, its skin a bashful red
And not a strand upon its head,
With dewdrop tears began to weep
And upset all the other sheep!

Bottlecap

An ivory sheen, an ivy-like green
A bottle cap sits on the shelf.
The ridges run ragged, rigid and jagged
A bottle cap all by itself.

Blades of Grass

Somedays I am a dewey blade of grass
That wakes up in the pale light, stiff and cold
And with the dawn, my dewdrops turn to glass;
An emerald prism, every hue I hold.
Somedays I am a sun-warmed blade of grass
That gently sways and ripples in the breeze;
While contemplating hours as they pass,
I count how far the shadows creep on trees.
Somedays I am a flattened blade of grass
That lays unnoticed, pummeled by the rain;
And even though I'm choking on morass,
Unbeaten and unbroken I remain.

Each day I feel a different sort of blade
And with each year a greener, fuller glade.

My Self

My Self is such a wretched little thing
With lantern eyes and ever-wringing hands.
It never blinks nor halts its flitting
As it scurries back and forth.
What a strange sight my sickly Self makes!
And stranger silhouette!
For never will it willingly be Seen
Yet Lookout eternally it shall.
Those porthole eyes, they stay ajar,
Two camera lenses without cover.
Those wringing hands, like little hummingbirds
Flit and flutter in perpetual flight.

Although they try, go nowhere they will
Tied to my Self as they are.
My poor and loathsome Self, it clammers
Around its little cage, constantly
Looking Out in fear of all those who
May be looking back In.
So terrified of being cast in light
That only shadows clothe its thin frame.
So petrified of other lantern eyes
That the most they can do
In any given situation
Is swing around frantically,
Looking for some kind of umbral reprieve.

My multifaceted Self,
Like a diamond, rough-hewn and gleaming,
Always showing a new face to new faces,
Hiding that miserable creature beneath.
Little do they know of its existence
And littler still notice its pungent desperation
That follows it through the sparse shrubbery
Of its self-made prison.

Ah! But here lies the irony
Of this sad, trembling Self;
For it fears any who would Notice it.
This simple explanation,
Or exposé, more accurately said,
Keeps the creature's hands ever-wringing
And its lantern eyes ever swinging
In terror and anticipation of a Reader
Who might be looking In.