

Cana

When they tipped the jars
— which were actually those old amphorae
that cradled wines from Rome to Tarsus,
Hellespont to Heliopolis
— it wasn't water any more.

It ran red as blood
and He fell silent
hearing the echo
of a word yet unspoken.

But the steward, an obsequious Greek
won by his master casting lots
(graduate, All-But-Dissertation
— Pythagorean U., Corinth Campus)
simpered
at the rube.

Though, he said, it was quite a fine merlot,
the main course was fish.
Could you do something in a white?
And the guests, hearing a magician was
miraclizing out back,
almost stampeded to make requests:
They were a Zealot crowd.

So Mary, seeing Him clutch his stomach
which announced dyspepsia loud and clear,
asked if He'd like to leave now.
And he did.

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However, the mysterious Q saw all.
He recounted it, raconteur he was,

to a scribbler, circa 60, in Thessaly,
who, à la Woodward / Bernstein, plied
Q — with wine, not coffee —
slurring his notes when Q left to refill.

The story, like the scribbler's head, and vision,
came out blurry.

But he workshopped it at Ephesus
where they realized the steward's expertise
in Sophocles and Aeschylus
detracted from focus on the wine,
which must have been — *must* have been
— The Best.

They eliminated also that distracting byplay about the color.
And if anyone noticed they didn't care
that that steward, who's supposed to run the master's house
talked to his boss like someone
hired for the day
from Feasts R Us.

So anyway the point emerged:
Not what happened, but the Deeper Truth
the unschooled hungry heart always knew
but never knew it knew,

As fruit yearns to ripen.

Blood Drive

They keep calling you “hero” as though you were a kid
having to be verbally nudged off the high dive
or even the low dive.

The literature does that I mean:

The people with the stealthoscopes are too busy asking you
Have you ever had sex even once since 1977 with another man?
Have you ever paid to have sex either with money or drugs?
Has anyone ever paid you for... since 1977... even once
... shared a needle to inject drugs?
... spent six months or more total in the UK?
(so what, you wonder, do they do in the UK when they need it?)
... looked for an undue amount of time at a map of Africa?

Before you finally start
you’ve recited your Social Security number
five times.

But they know you now in this church hall,
people without pressure cuffs or red crossed coats or question or claim:
the cute white-haired Louise for instance who works the
reception table under the basketball net
(she reminds you of a first girl friend),
the bespectacled bustler at the recovery table
set up by the stage preempted with afterthoughts and unfinished by-play,
busted boxes herniating Christmas garlands in August heat.

They never seem to sport their own donation bandages.

Louise, looked at twice, may still not weigh the minimum 110 pounds.
And once upon a glance her eyes dodged to your shirt’s *I Gave!* stick-on
wanting to be wanted so.

Because there’s nothing like it,

what you've got aplenty.
It's all-state biracial multinational
and every kind of natural.
You may feel that you are plodding on the treadmills of obscurity
especially Monday mornings
but you're not the LED-up machine over there in the corner
glaring neon colors
coughing up product
at the in-chink of coin.

You are instead the real Real Thing.
A real piece of work:
A sack of sin and crimson sustenance
broadcasting to the first in need,
just as yours
tapped into this
same pipeline
in their hour.

This is what your preemie daughter needed,
Your mother, that time she had cancer,
Your brother when he wrecked that bike,
Your buddy when he took that bullet.

Heroic though?

— come on.

You're just doing for other strangers
what other strangers did for yours,
strangers to themselves.

Stranger yourself, you don't need what's called closure,
the story that a story must complete
because they don't just go on
the way they really do.

It doesn't matter, what happens to today's pint
what happened to the last one.

You just lie back and let it flow

seems the least you could do:
Run in this easy-flowing roadwork,
this highway
this interstate system
this over-arching network of veins
a-pulse
a-pulse
a-pulse.

Since 1500

It's hard to see the difference
In 25 mere generations,
Though your wife's brother Carl,
 mouth full of turkey,
 claims infallibility.
He loves to poke you in the ribs
 or gouge your eye
 with his faith moving mountains
 of jobs to the world's truly
 exploitable.
After each election he'll crow at you
 How's that hope thing working for you
 that faith thing.
You want to reply
 How many folks have you sold out today
 but really he's a brother too throws back his head
 laughs from his belly
 sends huge packages at Christmas.
When he dies,
 you will miss him,
And how he loved to tow your kids
 behind his fun, godawful
 powerboat.

But those blunt dull tools of God's wrath in 1500
 came rude and wet to life
 like you;
 and so did those victim misbelievers disemboweled:
Martyr and holy murderer
 all lanced toward something

dimly seen
on a father's spit, a mother's blood.

Here's the real confession:
I'm not so far beyond the burning rage,
the lune-y howls.
The suspicions Carl had for instance
that someone over there had a bigger,
better boat just *handed* to him
— the welfare — for *nothing* —
That's not so far from the common cause I feel
for affordable care,
a holy spirit I long for
as I sing in the silent night,
Or while I read the times
Don Quixote
excuse me Walter Mitty
guzzling at the fountainhead.

I know the hunger and thirst
to purify this flag.

But I'm sad. My hands are tied. I see
extinction for my kind very near
persecution even
as I try to keep the faith baby:
I denounced everything they offered
free rifles free markets

and now

I can feel my soles already flying like angels,
daily news slipped under my chin
the crowd mocking my union authorization cards

while the hoods whisper in my ear
one last time:

Abjure.