

Phoenix

As from the ashes it rose with molt
and molten rock a rebirth of earth,
in one sense,

Dante's Inferno breaking
the ceiling of crust,
in another.

Many ran to the church, some to reason
some just curious if any priest
had risen.

Father this and that—
had drawn sublime music
from the depths of choir boys.

Father such and such—
had often fed the poor
his sinners leftovers.

Father tenor and baritone—
had declared love thy neighbor
hate their vice.

The crowd pounded against
bolted doors, apologies and blood
spilling heavily upon the oak.

Behind closed walls, those three fed
Christ's flesh to the luxurious bird, bent
to kiss its fiery feathers,
which burnt their lips.

Those unconcerned with Vatican matters
sent spelunkers
—through—cracking—plates—
television anchors blabbered tectonics
you should have listened
while the police rallied the risen
into camps, no explanation.

The sense of rebirth thick in steamy air. Some waited
for lost loves to return,
battling the surge
with open freezers,
ice blocks,
air-conditioning,
cold beer
praying their windows had been tempered,
and that their cellars
remained stocked.

Ascension came from below,
nobody broke the sky. Although,
those devoid of hope defeated gravity.

Not so much from flying
but falling such again
and again, they would rise.

Roots

As Avery picked up the apple, he thought of the angry orchard.
A drink his father knocked from his hand, a mess of the carpet, saying
that's what sissies drink, popped him one on the head,
at the back where no teacher could see.
Go get the ball and chain to clean up your mess.

Avery looked up at the tree, from which the apple must have fallen,
the apple was red and the leaves had already turned brown
still clutching the branches, some fallen leaves and one apple
on the ground. This doesn't seem right. No other fruit.

This brought his mind back to the anger and the orchard
and how some church somewhere considered alcohol a sin
and every cop everywhere said for Avery it's an offence,
but his soul and the detention center were of no concern to his father.
Either lockdown or hellfire would bring hair to his chest
faster than whiskey. Avery stumbled a bit, nearly dropped the apple.

This brought his mind back to what he held in his hand,
and more laws, those concerned with onto which side
of the fence the fruit had fallen...
but it must have been placed there, delicately, no bruises,
this wasn't a fruit tree, just as Avery wasn't a sissy.
He played football, and his cider was hard.

Avery's mind drifted to the locker room.
He pulled the rubber band on his wrist,
to its farthest limits— then released,
which stung more than the knock to his head,
did nothing to free his mind of sin.

So Avery decided to hop the fence,
where he could climb the tree looking
for evidence of any other apple hidden
among the foliage, but the tree was barren.
Avery lounged among the crisp leaves; no one noticed
as he climbed about someone else's tree,
if they did notice, they certainly didn't care enough
to yell or raise the phone. Avery stayed, restless,
the wind came next to take away some leaves.
It was November, Ash and Aspen
had already fallen, and Avery, too,

could fall if he wanted.

At dusk, the lights in the house turned,
and Avery could see a happy family gather
around the kitchen table, passing smiles and plates,
so there must be talk of common pleasantries.
How was your day, son?
Swell, father, I brought the teacher an apple
and he gave me an A!
Well, isn't that great. This looks delicious, darling,
you must have been cooking all day.

Avery placed the apple in his backpack
and shook the branches intensely, dropping
more leaves than the wind as he descended to the ground.
Nobody noticed. He hopped the fence, walked home
unlocked the door to raucous ambience, no welcoming scents.

He went into the forbidden office and placed the apple
gently upon his father's desk.

Against The Precipice

The moon ascends while crests of water hit
softly before the clouds condense.

The gray— what should they be called, those clouds, when they cover the whole sky?

The gray turns purple from rumbles that do not always break completely free, the static builds.
Now wind picks up, waves hit in higher crests, and finally rain begins to fall.

A consistency of those waves comes in allegro beats.
The background drizzle of wind,
a crescendo in drops.

It goes like this against the precipice below a shack atop the rock held against the relentless...
pick the word: breaker, roller, comber, boomer. Or turn a phrase: big kahuna, white horse.

Pummels of water and more water, spray rises, pellets fall
till every plant (the shack has a garden) upon
the precipice sings.

Psalm

As the night fell into day, people spoke of it dying to light rather slowly. They saw the stars in agony as one by one they faded. Leaving the brightest star, some called the morning star; other times the evening star, decreasing in its glory till it was gone.

“Does it know what its done wrong?”

A child asked this.

“Do you?”

By noon the sight had been forgotten, and in its place shone nothing but sun, as the clouds had gone weeks ago. Forgotten before the passing of the stars. Forgotten after the parting of the sea, which some had called even in its youth, dead.

“I don’t.”

The child mustered their answer.

“What have you learned?”

By evening, even the breeze had stilled away; if it had passed it would only remain in place. The leaves did not turn to dust; they went from red to brown to gray. Then nothing, as if some thief had stolen them in the... in the... tch, in broad daylight.

“I can’t remember what I used to wish upon.”

The child sighed.

“What have you learned?”

At midnight, only roots remained on the ground, and people toiled them for bugs. The crust did cool a bit as its core solidified, but the earth no longer turned, and heat surged from above. As the atmosphere lacking clouds, like roots without leaves, stood its place.

“What have you learned?”

The child twisted and turned.

“That I can’t remember what I used to wish upon, but what I do know is that I grow tired of this same old sun.”

The Pull of Pulp Pales in Comparison to Your Shampoo

I sleep next to a copy of Howl
but I would prefer
to its fiftieth anniversary edition
the comfort of your body next to mine
sleeping through everything while
I watch
the subtle rise and fall of your breast
or on your stomach the still of your back

I would play you the piano quietly
a soundtrack for dreams
which is all that you have become, silently
to me