

End Of Days Report

War

At the outskirts of my village a small army rises up, undetectable...
perhaps a soldier wakes in a room from which a blue vase has been removed;
or a squadron of little ones leaves a school room to assault an angel.
Maybe a dog pulls a rag out of the garbage and shakes it.

In one month's time even the most reserved of our pacifists will be dipping
a rusted spoon in the gravy, stirring chunks of meat and grinning
with a mouth full of missing teeth and rage.

Had I not been alert to the slight rise in temperature attendant on the spirit moving
from light into dark...well, suffice it to say the signs were easily missed.
But yes, I knew from the beginning. And so my trigger finger came to attention
as my right eye caught a sparrow leaving the silo with a bead of wet grain.

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Gentle seeker, I've been to Burkenport and back. The light fails, the darkness seeps and illuminates, offers cover for the rich to starve under, provides mantels of silk for the poor, an intoxication without drink for those who are so diseased, who have promised "Never again," who reach into their pockets for a book of matches, open it to a page of illumination, satisfied to never be lonely again, if just for a moment.

As I was leaving the city I had just arrived at in the morning, I took a moment to shudder, to exhale, although I couldn't think what it feels like to breathe, although I had just witnessed a sparrow untangle herself from a flock, then enter the priesthood of singularity, only to slip back into groupthink as a flutter of impale on a branch of wisteria. Having let my breath out, there was nothing to do but sigh, there at the moment of last chance that would bring me home to lie down among the dead and the beautiful, o prophets of what went wrong in the beginning.

Gentle seeker, Burkenport was a gamble, a failure to exaggerate, a reality pushed down deep inside a felony slowly turning itself into a memory where the real and fictitious are twins shorn from the same egg, born in each other's arms, and seeming, at first, until they can be torn apart, to be sharing a leg, perhaps a spinal cord, surely a hope or two? Burkenport played out as you thought it might, predicted through a cast of broken street glass. That the dogs returned, as usual, just before dawn, their heads tired from what the moon does to the bones of the mouth, well... Ah, desire.

At noon I found myself looking into a goblet of wine, wherein a white feather was seen, almost aggrieved with floating, and this is what I had for supper as well, a small wisp of a meal, the equivalent of a kiss between mice, for in Burkenport all hunger is fundamental, a joke between cousins involving the history of their own invented language, a language that will never be spoken again once the younger one dies unexpectedly, leaving the other to whisper before clocks, and catch a wildness of eye when she looks askance into a mirror. Then, the afternoon was spent in search of the newspaper we had talked about, Gentle Seeker, with the headline about our nation's space program, the one launching our philosophical quandries toward the skirts of blue stars, hoping in the depths of the quiet of space to gain a purchase on the mathematical problems of grief...that longing heard in the absence of sound at the other end of the telephone.

I must report my search was a failure, so I spent the rest of the afternoon conversing with poets who had done nothing wrong during the occupation, and later sat for my portrait rendered by the husband of an important official of the Council Of Nine Virtues, which official later sat with us discussing the philosophies of Benjamin of Aramire, who died, as all great philosophers must, in a car crash involving the twentieth century.

Who knows who is an inspired fool? That's the question she posed to us before taking the last bottle of wine and going up to bed with a young lawyer.

Prayer For The End Of Hope

How the kingdom of God comes unto us.
But we come not unto it, even as it rises, countless times
to the occasion as the birds form into a flock, but we persist
in our solitary ways, creating and destroying the world.

And God says unto us through the creature, through such science:
“Behold.” And God speaks and is content, but we can’t abide such
contentment but rather travel and see things. And in that way suffer.
For have we not declared “This and that?”

God has been found in our throats yet we stammer confused.
God has issued from the honeysuckle but it is not our time and never will be.
We are the last to know. Yes, yes, we are sane and name ourselves
Louise and Tom and wear velours and saffrons. In our pockets there are many keys.

Even so do we carry bags of groceries in one hand as we reach into our pockets
for these keys. We drop the keys, kneel, curse, rise and unlock the door.
We enter through the door but are not saved. Even as we have separated ourselves
from God and called “God”, we have become a miserable people, exalted, holy,
able, when strong and healthy, to move swiftly for hundreds of yards.

I, for one, have laughed and coughed, clicked on a link expecting doves only to find
there were sparrows.
For we’re unable to move through space using the gaps between words.

Come, let us now pray: O brains, we hear ourselves.
Amen.
O, congressman and technocrats.
Amen.
Is there money in our banks?
O Lord, please make machines and warehouses available.
Super-amen.

O physicians, and estate sale auctioneers,
restore us to the youth we remember, and not the youth of our true history.
Amen (with hands clasped and eyes squeezed shut to indicate we are praying).

Translator For The Invasion

You translate death with your very last breath.

You translate the world into the world
for the sake of the all that's fallen in between.

People ask you "What have you done?"

It's their wonder you translate from your soul
through examinations of grief.

A woman comes up to your hands
as you translate gestures of absence nightly.

You show her, by not explaining, but by translating,
because she hasn't asked.

A street begins at the suddenness of your failure to sleep.
This you translate as tomorrow.

Shadows watch from the dark to see where they'll arrive
as soon there's light. This you render as the past.

If you couldn't translate—you tell yourself as you study
January and other names for remembering—everything might be the same.

Or, the period at the end of the last untranslatable sentence might
rock back through the afternoon as a tumult searching a grave.

Greg, you say, translating furiously, which holds only
one atom together, thus saving and condemning the world.

Greg, you try again, but can't quite capture its meaning,
so you take it for your name.

Thoughts of the Newly Dead

Don't pray for the animal found inside of roses
as thunder in a flower is anything but a miracle.

We are raised from the hands inward,
and once fully aware shouldn't suffer—
for the love of the dead is the weight of thinking.

A “?” floating like blood in a bowl of water.
But we are last winter, and then there's next summer:

Everything that summer has promised to be and delivered—
crowding, accessible, shimmering, toxic, olives, hearts, and always,
of course, the inward and outward—is held back from us.

Summer, angry with prayers of birth, smoking them
while falling asleep, full of ink and alive.

And yet winter kept after us, holding us to itself like two
lovers held to a kiss until released into separate moonlights.

Why aren't we buried in your trees?