

## Fingerprints of God

I walked into the shallow waves

my feet marring the fingerprints of God

endless lines dancing across the sand

Adam was wrought on a beach

not beneath the shade of trees

it is here the dust of creation rests

the remnants of miracles caught in the tide

and placed in children's castles

## Excalibur

Years

and

years

had

long

since

sunken into rings of time

before the child came to try,

when first

he drew

from fists

of stone

his right

to claim

the throne of England, cut away the vines and moss of mother's cradleside stories

to bare the silver steel of kings. Though rich, his bloodline mattered little:

countless sons of lords long dead had tried before him.

Each had failed: they knew too much to take the crown.

Only children haven't learned that they can't be heroes.

## The Swan of Loch Mornay

The starlight glimmered on the lake  
the waters smooth and bright,  
for not a wave nor ripple broke  
the shores that autumn night.

The waters had been still for years,  
since hero young had come  
and driven swan from mountain pool  
for village, hearth and home.

Up the path from hills below  
that diamond clear-cool night  
came he, the ancient hero brave  
to sit on banks of white.

Two-score ago, his frame unbent  
and vigor in his stride,  
he'd climbed the mountain paths alone  
just as he'd done tonight.

And in his youth, the mountain lands  
were flush with fowl and game  
thus many nobles journeyed there:  
for easy hunts they came.

The deer soon fled the hills and glens  
for only death was there,  
and soon the woods were silent, cleared  
of boar and hart and bear.

Soon after this the villagers  
knew plague beyond their ken  
for drake flew from highlands cold  
to feast on sons of men.

Each night it stole amongst their homes  
and come the waking day  
the farmers mourned their stolen beasts  
and mothers wept for babes.

The wyrm was swift, both sure and strong  
and did its work by night,  
in only shadows was it seen  
outside the lantern light.

Of flashing feathered wings that shone  
With moonlight bright and clear  
spoke those who glimpsed the dreadful thing  
that filled their hearts with fear.

The people shook by night to think  
they would not see the day  
and named the beast that ruled the dark  
the Swan of Loch Mornay.

The lord was told, his knights were sent  
with steed and steel and shield  
but those that dared the mountain path  
by fire their fates were sealed.

In time the people fled in droves  
and would not chance to stay  
for death was sure to those that dwelt  
beneath the mountain's shade.

The hero, then naught but a youth  
who split wood for his bread,  
took up his axe and vowed that soon  
the dragon would be dead.

The townsfolk left thought him a fool  
yet coldly urged him fight:  
for sure the drake would slay the boy  
and spare them for the night.

And so the youth took up the quest  
and strode the mountain trail:  
the taunts of elders did not sway  
his faith he wouldn't fail.

The skies were clear, the sun was high  
and merry seemed the air  
for fair and bright was the long road  
to dragon's stony lair.

O'er the hills the boy soon found  
'neath peaks the winding way  
before him was the lake and there  
the Swan of Loch Mornay.

It was no beast or bird this thing,  
more like an angel bright  
with wings as snow caught in the wind  
and eyes of star-hemmed night.

It swam amongst the sun-flecked waves  
and bent its flower-head  
with lazy grace to pluck at fish  
and singing as it fed.

'Tis said that dragon-song is cursed  
and steals the hearts of men.  
the hero knew the stories right:  
he'd ne'er know peace again.

He almost felt the dragon made  
in truth, no notes aloud  
instead its song drew forth his dreams  
and spun them into sound.

The hero felt his spirit touched:  
recast, made shining, whole  
in chords of light that sounded from  
the heartstrings of his soul.

He could not bring himself to slay  
so fair and bright a beast:  
with an enraptured heart he turned  
to leave the dragon be.

Yet as he left the hero's foot  
was snarled by the way,  
the dragon heard the fall and turned  
to kill once more that day.

The hero knew he'd met his end,  
and did not fear to die,  
yet when the moment was at hand,  
he heard a wailing cry.

As quick as light the dragon fled,  
the puzzled hero stood,  
and upon peering in its lair,  
he finally understood.

With heavy heart he took his axe  
and then the hero brave  
with hunter's patience hid and watched  
at the mouth of the cave.

Soon night fell and the swan emerged  
the waiting hero crept  
unnoticed to the dragon's side  
and hewed the creature's neck.

Even in death the music drew  
from every star a song.  
once more the hero raised his axe,  
and then the swan was gone.

The sudden silence shook the air  
and echoed in the sky.  
The hero turned and heard again  
the piteous, wailing cry.

The young were small, and weeping came  
to beg their mother rise.  
The bloody task again he worked,  
through aching, tear-burnt eyes.

The old man wept as he had done  
that long past, hated day  
at evil work his hand had done  
beside the Loch Mornay.

A hunter's nature is not sin:  
a wolf does not do wrong  
in taking yearlings to its den  
to feed its starving young.

So may we all learn by this tale  
of swans and drakes and sin  
that evil's not a thing of beasts:  
it is a thing of men.

Alphabestiary: the Facts.

Angels

Barring the rebellious ones  
they tend to lack personality.  
They were meant to act, not write.

Behemoth

A hippopotamus with a weight problem,  
too embarrassed to tell us otherwise  
and too vain to give up the attention.

Charybdis

wanted to be a singer.  
It didn't work out:  
she gargled too much.

Dragons

are the favorites and know it,  
spoiled and manipulative,  
always spouting hot air.

Echidna

The mother of all monsters  
she makes eggs and babies,  
both as a mother and as a cook.

Fenris

is all tied up and asks for a hand.  
It makes people nervous  
even if they don't know why.

Griffons

contrary to popular belief,  
aren't confused at all:  
they go both ways.

Hydra

suffers a painful secret:  
each time it grows  
it's just a little smaller.

Imps  
want to be demons  
but don't make the cut:  
no one takes baggy pants and sideways hats seriously.

Jormungandr  
Is a right brain sort  
but tends to talk himself in circles  
and put his 'foot' in his mouth.

Kirin  
are the really beautiful unicorns;  
they look nothing like the stereotype  
and are delightfully modest.

Lycanthropes  
regret the sudden change of temperament  
but deal with monthly issues as best they can  
it's not their fault they get so mean.

Manticore  
had a lovely singing voice  
and enjoyed kids,  
not that we appreciated his attentions.

Nymphs  
blond, buxom, and beautiful,  
they'd be perfect but they've been chased so long  
they got a little dull.

Oni  
Japanese demons with impeccable manners,  
no one's sure what to make of them,  
just the way they like it.

Pandora  
Nothing to say.  
Mostly.  
Oops?

Quetzalcoatl  
Trying to distance himself from the apple incident,  
this snake traded his scales for feathers.  
It worked too well: folk think he's God.



Rocs

Back when they bagged elephants  
these guys had it all.  
Now they just tell stories.

Thunderbird

upgraded when the phoenix  
went up in flames.  
better to play it safe.

Undead

get so much press these days  
they don't go out much,  
not wanting the attention.

Valkyries

Like their music loud.  
people don't appreciate the noise  
but no one has the guts to call them on it.

Wyverns

Wannabe dragons,  
these little bastards lack the fire.  
And the stones.

X

is new.  
No one knows what he looks like,  
except maybe Mulder.

Yowies

From the down-under,  
they beat their chests and hoot  
but have little to contribute.

Zombie

misses his home in Haiti  
pining for magic,  
wanting something other than brains.

## Logophilia

I found the package wrapped in twine  
worn and frayed by dust and time  
mantled deep in cobweb lines  
*cavort, carom, contrive*

Inside the folded papers lay  
words forgot until that day  
fallen from the common way  
*bastion, broach, belay*

They danced and twisted everywhere  
gladly freed into the air  
winding whither-whence they'd dare  
*ensemble, err, ensnare*

But words are not inclined to roam  
as they are not of flesh or bone  
so gladly I gave them a home  
and now share them with you

*Defenestration, heresiarch, lugubrious, regale,  
confusticate, contrariwise, potentate, grimoire,  
adultate, admonishment, insipidity, wrest,  
infinitude*