

QUEER BRUNO

The Sermon of Endurance



*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me.
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.*

The purple robes close their mouths. They're the power
lines that distract the journey
to sermons. Singing summons heat
before endurance comes on Bruno

quick, steps up to the podium.
Pews straighten his spine—
thick wood in his palms,
his fingers tense red.

Young Bruno's Achilles heel
echoes against the kneeler—
against the preacher's words,
Momma's endurance.

His fingers go through the holes
of her cross-stitched sweater.
He presses tight against her bosom—
arm stiff, keeps broken concentration away.

Endurance has no imagination—
it's distracted by the words of free men.

They're too busy to notice
tiny seraph wieners and Michael
wetting the clouds with white skin,
his cardio kissed pectorals
slicing old sin.

They're too busy to hear
Michael's bouncy skirt
gagging us with alpha notes—
singing salvation, singing the next life,
singing God's tomorrow.

But Bruno notices Michael
and hopes God blows a stronger breeze
allowing him a peek
under the warrior's physique—
the glory of that bosom

that transfigures you and me.
A chance for Bruno to die and make men
Holy as long as Michael makes him free
in his secret billowing pillow fortress,
under his locks of blonde hair.

The free men rise
with busy Bruno
enduring his secrets
before he must shout

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
His truth is marching on!

Straight Ribbons for Momma

Momma tells Bruno to zip up his gaze
when staring at women; meanwhile, silent prayers
beg to keep his eyes up. Bruno looks down
away from the big hats. Being a good boy,
he never stares like a heathen again. His gaze
replaces hats with dainty fingers—Bruno hopes his fingers
will shrink so he can always play with ribbons.
Bruno loves crafts and making straight bows for Momma.
Look, Momma. Blood of Christ for your hat.
Thinking pink again, Momma hides perfection
in her purse safely away from alpha note voices.

The Boys That Don't Know

Masculinity is a musk off of Bruno's tongue. Always has, always will keep him safe. Bruno calms the nerves of the boys that don't know—

his well-placed *fudge packer* taunt, the relief of the *you would know* response. Bruno doesn't need to remind them—the basketball leaves

down the arc of dominion. He can't extinguish the extra flare of his flicked wrist, but like all good boys Bruno can masque

in sweat seamlessly—it's the Christlike effort that counts. Sneaker squeak sirens summon Bruno into desire—

he longs for his spot with the boys that don't know. There are other boys and they know how to find him.

One catches Bruno's gaze before his mast hits the hardwood floors. The boy's cheek slides into Bruno's chest, hands disappearing

beyond the rocks—a biting mist. Bruno grabs his wrists and yanks him back into the ship. The boy smiles: *I hope you're good at this game.*

He walks by with dramatic hips. Bruno looks at the court. The boys that don't know don't see anything.

Bruno's left between the gym and the exit doors.

Bruno Speaks: Twink Chaser

I.

He is a violin serenade man. Pauses in the car lead to castled clubs. Roses were in my future. He was sweet. I knew what convenience meant—a sort of back seat privacy. The next town over has palm tree boulevards and bridges to islands. I didn't recognize anybody there. The odometer turned 100,000 on our last trip. I felt every mile. I know he did too. I felt embarrassed riding that long.

At the destination I drank too much, yet couldn't alter my existence. I never felt like I was really there. Monotonous car rides are moments when the weight of air reads the seconds aloud. I felt guilty, but liked the care. When his ultimatum popped I wasn't ready. I wasn't ready for revelations.

II.

Shopping malls store the town's gossip. Shelves are adequate barricades—they reinforce the ideal of specter queers touching our boys. She—the one I bring around my parents—talks about him and his boys. How he buys them comfort and performs. I laugh. He could be listening on the other side of men with plastic abdomens. I feel the miles.

III.

I don't believe anybody told me it was wrong. They couldn't quote the passage if apocalypse depended on it. If it just would stand underneath wooden crosses. And a Great Chain of Being does sound grand—a place where queers could have their space.

I miss the violin and I missed bouquets of roses. 100,000 miles passed between us. Must I bring this up? The penance is this world's memory. I am without transcendence. Resignation is seeking state crafted clarity.

IV.

Afterwards there is something comfortable. Dinner is made. My clothes are washed. Antique responsibilities are alluring and pretty. I have a good job. Mental health is insured. My smile is white and pure.

I mow the grass. I trim the bushes. I don't play music. My children do. I encourage brass. I have a car, but I was told it is old. My children will be lease-to-lease adults.

I slip and think about the slow power lines that dipped and rose—the moment when silence's meaning was as recognizable as the taste of salt. What muddy thoughts. I know comfort without him. He made things so easy, but the light of revelations almost penetrated the town.

Before I lifted my palm out of his hand he said everything was okay. He gave one last squeeze before he let go. Highway to highway is stars and stripes consciousness. Jesus died in a thin loin cloth. He must pity the boys looking up at him.

Bruno Speaks: Trapping a Princess Toad

I licked a toad with a wart on the left corner of its large rubber mouth. It turned into a princess with Virgin Mary white wedding garments. She wore a veil, an ankle length dress, and no shoes. Her grape toes had yellow nails. She used to be a gross frog in a swamp, after all. I lifted the veil.

What's the matter, sweetie?

I'm the fattest princess ever.

I think you're the prettiest princess ever.

What do you know? You've never been with a princess before. She hissed like a reptile instead of an amphibian, which croaks baritones of disapproval.

I told her I love her. The source came from my plastic teeth. She sighed placing the veil back over her face.

Shall we? I smiled. She nodded. I grabbed her webby fingers tight and tugged. I had to act quickly.

We shuffled down the middle aisle of the courthouse towards the judge at the front.

I don't find your gesture heroic, she whispered.

I love you.

You'd love any princess.

That's not true.

Before her I'd lay in my bed at nights and dream. I'd clutch my pillow running my fingers through phantom hair as slot machine windows spun faces in my pillow. Lucky Robin. Lucky me. The judge was curt when we arrived.

The court notes that there is no villain or meek, pathetic protagonist in this room. This is probably just a display of almighty God's wrath for performing premarital decadence. Shame on both of you. Let's move on, we're very busy. Do you take her?

I do, she croaked.

And you?

I do, I crooned.

Any objections? The empty courtroom ticked time away. *You may kiss.*

My lips landed, parted open, on the left corner of her rubber mouth. My tongue licked counter-clockwise around the princess's red wart. I had made it in time. I was royalty.