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The Hermit

Madmen masquerade as gods in party hats purchased as tokens of orthodox teaching, placed in high esteem only to gather dust.

Castrion men defend their frontiers, forming solid foundations of barbaric aggression, with constant threat of extermination.

Disposable, excess matter Papermen flung into social incinerators. A pyromaniac’s delight, to watch the fire swell.

Puppets voice the controlled opinions Hermits burrow to avoid dilemma.

Leslie Hoover
To laugh and cry...

To laugh and cry, to seek and hide,
The world is just a stone.
A madman's dream, a king, a queen
demented on the throne.
Six serpents laid upon the blades
of life's eternal laws.
And just as fast it came to pass,
They struck out with their claws.
A priestess stares the holy glare
turns grown men into dogs.
Silent oaths and drunken boasts
as flames rise from the logs.
A town lies sleeping. Shadows creeping
Move against a wall.
The moon awaits and thru the gates
the worm begins to crawl.
The end comes now, the children howl
as darkness spreads it's hand.
Silence speaking. Pluto shrieking,
The stone falls from the dam.

Joe Buday
Friends

Four-hundred tired miles
Friends sped through the night.
Not caring that the money was spent,
To spring me from a solitary cell.
Broke but united we laughed the way back —
Michael and Ronnie, Blind Eddy, and Me.

Warming a lone cold room,
Sharing the bread, and wine,
The grass, and the good times
Along with the bad;
We were quite a family, quarrels and all —
Michael and Ronnie, Blind Eddy, and Me.

As guardian trolls
Perched on wave-washed rocks,
We watched the phosphorescent sand flash
As one of our number would leap down
Splashing its kaleidoscopic colors —
Michael and Ronnie, Blind Eddy, and Me.

Up the coast highway,
Hard-rocking and high-riding,
We would join in communion
In the smoke-filled, speeding machine.
Star-dreaming and space-rapping —
Michael and Ronnie, Blind Eddy, and Me.

High on the haze-wrapped cliff,
Shimmering surrealism of a city below.
Ronnie played low, while Eddy would stare.
Michael spoke in soft parables
Meant for my deaf ears —
Michael and Ronnie, Blind Eddy, and Me.

Now Eddy's on the dodge
Or in some lonely, unknown jail.
Whatever the case,
He ran — leaving no clues.
His glass gaze would stand sentry no more
For Michael and Ronnie ——— and Me.

Why she ever left
She would not, or could not, say.
But we heard she was well,
And happy sometimes.
But the loss of our sister-lover made us both moody — Michael ——— and Me.

Carrying on, as a pair,
We lasted for quite some time.
But our buffers both gone
Our single selves chafed
Until swift words threw up stone-stubborn walls between Michael ——— and Me.
Transcendence

Unleashed from mechanical grip,
Stunned by liberation's sting,
Fever encumbers the tranquilized
shell of man.

Staggering toward salvation
through blinded motivation
Rectitude remains virgin.

As Janus-faced nymphs entice these
vagrant souls into vaporized delusion,
the mist of choking ethics.

While entangled in satanic strings
tied to the boot of hell,
Man is robbed of emotion.

Remorse of repeated screams
echoes realized sorrow,
as the stench of burning flesh
intoxicates.

Pain reluctantly takes its leave
as the glowing ghost offers hope
and divine comprehension.

Transcendent energy is aroused.
Prayer heard,
Diabolical chains vanish.

Leslie Hoover
Carol Laubenstein

“Who me?
I’m just the little sister.”

The snow was falling so heavily we could not even see the barn. Papa had to run a rope from the barn door to the house so he could find the barn to milk the cows. My sister and I were baking Christmas cookies. We were really quite a sight, all covered with flour and sugar. I was looking out the window at the snow. I loved snow. Suddenly I saw a form coming toward the house.

“Hey, Papa, look,” I said. “Out by the pump.”
Papa went over to the window and pulled the crisp white curtains back so he could see what was outside.

“Foolish boy!” he said. “You’d think he’s been here often enough to be able to stay home during a blizzard like this. Well, Peggy, let him in. It’s cold outside.”
Peggy ran to the stairs and yelled, “You let him in, Betsey. I have to go fix myself. I look absolutely terrible.”

“Ya,” I mumbled to myself. “Almost as terrible as I do. But then what difference does it make how I look? After all I’m only the little sister, am I not?”

I went to the door and opened it up. There stood Nick with the foolish grin of a mischievous school boy spreading from ear to ear. He really was not very good looking. He had a big nose and little eyes that looked like mere slits in his weathered face.

“Come on in boy, it’s cold outside,” I said looking up at his six foot stature.

“I’ve noticed,” he mumbled as he stamped the snow off his feet and walked into the kitchen. “You’ve been making cookies I see. Can I have one?”

“Only one,” I warned, “the rest we have to save till Christmas.”

“Where’s Peggy?” he asked, pushing a crumb of cookie that was stuck on his mouth.

“She ran upstairs to make herself beautiful,” I answered.

“Oh, and all this time I thought she was a natural beauty,” laughed Nick. “Oh, but she is. When she’s not covered with flour,” I lied.

“That flour doesn’t look too bad on you,” he said laughing as he went to the stairs and yelled, “O.K. gorgeous, hurry up.”
Peggy came down the stairs looking like a princess which only made me feel more like Cinderella.
Peg and Nick cuddled up on the couch whispering and giggling, and I tried my best to act like a good mother and fade into the woodwork. I cleaned the entire kitchen before sitting down in an empty chair in the parlor. I looked out at the fresh snow thinking about how much fun it would be to build a snowman. But then that would be childish and I was supposed to be a young lady.

“You like the snow don’t you Betsey?” Nick asked.

“I guess so,” I answered in a whisper.

“So do I,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of things in common, I thought to myself. We both like dogs, we both like horses and we both like snow and we both like Peggy. That’s only logical though because Peg and I have a lot of things in common too. We like the same kind of foods, the same kind of clothes, and the same kind of boys.

“Would you like to build a snowman with us, Betsey?” asked Nick.

“Oh, there is nothing I’d rather do,” I blurted out too eagerly. “Really, I was just thinking about it.”

“Listen, I don’t want to get all full of snow,” Peggy cut in. “If you want to go outside and play in the snow, Bes, go right ahead.” Then turning to Nick she said, “You don’t mind if we don’t build a snowman, do you?”

“Well,” I broke in, “I don’t want to make a snowman all by myself so I’ll stay in too, O.K.?“

“Fine,” said Peggy. “But why don’t you go run in the kitchen like a good girl?”

“Yes Ma’am,” I said as I started to get up. Then I thought, since when do I do what she tells me to just because she’s a year older. I wanted to say, “No, I can
stay if I want to.” Instead I got up and walked slowly into the kitchen and sat down in the corner with my dog.

Papa came in and asked what I wanted to make for supper. I wanted to say, “Nothing, let Peggy make it.” But I said, “How about chicken? Nick loves it.”

I followed Papa out to the chicken coop. Papa grabbed a near-by chicken and chopped it’s head off. Then he gave me the bird and I held it upside down so the blood would run out. When we were finished Papa picked up the head and fed it to the hogs. Then I started to pluck the chicken. I dreaded this job and normally would never do it because I hated chickens. I hated all fowl. But both Nick and Peg loved chicken.

Papa and my older brother Steve were milking the cows, when Peggy and Nick came into the kitchen to tell me that were going to look at the stars. I know that the clouds were so thick that they would be lucky to find the moon, but I told them they could go outside if they didn’t stay long because supper was almost ready.

Papa and Steve came in and supper was already on the table. We waited for Peg and Nick for a while. Then Papa said we’d better eat before the food got cold. We were all finished eating when Peg and Nick finally came in.

“How were the stars?” I asked without even looking up.

“Fine,” replied Nick with his foolish smile.

“Your supper’s in the oven,” I said.

“Oh, that’s nice but I’m not very hungry. Maybe I’ll make myself a sandwich a little later,” my sister said.

“Ya, and maybe a piece of cake too,” added Nick.

“O.K.,” I said as I stuffed a handful of cookies in my mouth to get rid of the awful taste of chicken. Then I attacked the mountain of dishes which was before me.

Nick was going to stay overnight. This didn’t surprise me at all. It was a long walk from our house to his. Papa wouldn’t let him go out on such a cold night. He was going to sleep with Steve and walk home the following morning.

At night when Peggy and I were getting ready for bed, Peggy said something about going ice skating the next day. I thought Oh, fine, we’ll have fun together, but I don’t think I said anything.

The next morning I was awakened by light streaming in on my bed. Peggy had awakened before me, naturally. She always did, and of course, she had to let the beautiful sun light in even if it did mean waking me up. I dressed and went down stairs all ready to go skating. I was looking for Peggy when I saw Nick sitting in the parlor.

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

“Sitting. I hope it’s all right,” Nick snapped back at me.

“Well, I thought you’d be gone by now,” I said, trying to excuse my impolite remark.

“Peg and I are going ice skating this morning. I’m leaving this afternoon,” he explained.

“Oh,” I said very disappointed.

“Didn’t she say anything about it last night?” Nick asked.

Ya, come to think about it she did, I said under my breath as I went into the
kitchen to make myself an egg. I sat alone in the kitchen thinking about how much fun it was before Peggy had a boyfriend. We could do everything together and were really very good friends. But ever since Nick came along she never even had enough time to talk to me. Deep down inside I sometimes wished he would leave.

After I was done with my egg, I went over to the corner and struck up a conversation with the dog. “Listen to what Peg said last night. She said, ‘Do you like Nick, Betsy?’ ‘Ya, I guess I do,’ I said softly. ‘But don’t worry, I won’t steal him away from you! I’m not that kind of kid.’ She asked if I like Nick. What a question! A long time ago I told her I met this guy I really liked and I asked her to keep her hands off him. I told her there were plenty of fish in the sea but asked her to save this one for me because I wasn’t quite ready to cast my line out yet. I was still looking for worms. So what did she do? She ran off and grabbed him. Sure he likes her too, that’s obvious, but the least she could do is go away somewhere so I don’t have to see them both together all the time. I like her and I like him too. That’s my problem.”

The dog didn’t say anything. He just sat and stared which was fine with me. I was in no mood for backtalk. I waited until everyone was out of the house. Papa and Steve were in the barn and Peg and Nick were skating, and then I cried.

That night when we were getting ready for bed, Peggy was very quiet, and I was quiet too which was very unusual for me. Finally Peg broke the silence.

“Betsy, do you know why Nick came over yesterday?” she asked.

“He couldn’t live any longer without tasting one of my cookies,” I said joking.

“No, his family is going to move to the city. They already sold their farm. I’ll probably never see Nick again.” She was very serious.

“That’s too bad,” I lied. “I’m really sorry for both of you.”

I soon fell asleep, and when I awoke the next morning the blinds were still closed. Peggy was still asleep. I woke up before she did. Quietly I got dressed and ran down the stairs. I took the dog outside and there I told him the good news.

“I’ll let Nick go. Like I said before there are plenty of fish in the sea. Maybe I’ll catch one yet. At least I can have Peggy back again. One out of two isn’t bad, is it?”

The dog simply stared as usual. I patted him on the head and ran off to build the biggest snowman anyone has ever seen.

— Dennis Rambo
Festival

The golden nymph in stars and stripes was dancing
As holstered bikers strode by, coolly glancing.
She played and sang — not seeing a single gun —
But hipworn colts did steal the shine from the sun.

The hawkers their multi devices to ply,
The children their many escapes to try.
Not one of them could answer, or even ask, "why?"

As music coaxed the massed psyche to soar
The lightning riders sought in vein to score.
"For brotherhood" was called from way on stage;
The milling herd appeared from a darker age.

The promised tumbling trips to far-off places,
No one present is wearing straight shoe-laces,
Just myriads of blank stone faces.

As rolling hills the flashing hues envelope
On one of chrome it starts to develop.
The darkness hides the pain of a frightening night;
Its scars and shame appear in day's stark light.

It's true that many tried,
But bruised and battered babes cried.
The song of love had died.
Salty-winged sailboats...

Salty-winged sailboats glide through the air,
And crusty-skinned mules kick heels to the sky,
The white misty blanket refuses to budge,
While I am home sleeping, dreaming of love.

Sandpaper ladies all gaudied in gold,
Glittering gaily until they are sold,
Shallow and empty they'll always remain,
While I am home sleeping, dreaming of love.

Stifling stone trees destroy the young flowers,
And scorching winds blow to wear down the mountains,
Orange blazing scarecrows shiver in sunlight,
While I am home sleeping, dreaming of Jove.

White-eyed young children sobbing for peace,
Retching, despairing, they can't understand,
Making lost gestures and steeples of hope,
While I am home sleeping, dreaming of love.

People fleeing like rabbits, their mouths all agape,
Or wallowing wildly in the mire they make,
Insane blind musicians play in the square,
And I awake to the scream of a million anguished souls.

Michael Carroll
Antibody

Amazing labyrinths of colossal roads,
Passageways of wonders
wind dizzyingly through my mind field exploding.

The cold influences of near-affluence,
The effects of senseless melting confusion
breed internal confinement.

Searing haughty, hard self, stinging being,
body guarded so, Tie not
my golden mind to superficial streams
of spiceless time.

Robert Weisz
Arrows wail...

Arrows wail, screaming spears sink and quiver
in jumping flesh
Lazy lions yawn beneath the scaffold
slowly paw at playing children
Sun and moon crash; crystal lightnings flash
sending bright salty stars streaming across the sky

The die is cast, the robe is thrown
Christ on the Choo-Choo is going home.

- Karen Barnes
ee cummings
revisited

i try to hide my laugh
but my tears are tickling feathers
tickling
trickling
quicklyrunningdownmycheeks

can you see without your eyes (i ask myself)
of course
of course
of course
of course

you can see without your eyes (i tell myself)
i am as i look within myself without my eyes
i am
i am
i am
i am

i am more than any stone
or blade of grass
or wind
or rain
or sun
or them

and they know that i am more
for i point without my fingers
and i talk without my mouth

i am then and i will always be
a mountain
a brook
and freedom like the flying bird

for without my eyes
i have beheld
beheld
that which i am
that makes me better
than all the rest
yes i have made
yes i myself
discovery.

Michael Carroll
POINT OF VIEW, a magazine devoted to literary and visual points of view.