

## Songs from the Edge

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I  
I. After the Fall  
Two arms have I,  
two legs, two feet,  
two eyes to gaze  
on all I meet;  
two ears locate  
the speaker's site,  
each side I know  
as left or right.  
Inside, two chambers  
take in blood,  
and two pump out  
the crimson mud;  
two lungs, two kidneys  
in me nest,  
but on my ribs  
lies just one breast.

This isn't how I  
looked when born,  
but one was bad  
and from me torn.  
It makes me sad  
to see me so,  
one side a breast,  
the other, no.  
But deep inside  
I am aware  
this is a lesser  
cross I bear.  
What is to come  
will far worse be  
than seeing this  
asymmetry.

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## II. Chemo and Gould

I lie on my side like a shell on the beach,  
 legs curl in a spiral, head bent to my knee,  
 as I slumber, the tide slowly rises and fills  
 every angle and curve  
 every corner and sac.  
 The sea, Mother Ocean, with thick, turbid waters,  
 will rob precious dust and leach salt from her daughter.

The tide, now advancing, made bold by a tempest  
 that visits these waters in too frequent cycles,  
 disturbing the nap of this storm weary traveler,  
 testing her stance on a buffeted shore:  
 approaching waves beat her,  
 retreating waves drain and erode flesh  
 wherever a portal they breach.  
 The storm, like an engine  
 with deafening beat and cacophonous shrieking  
 is bursting my head, laying blood at my feet.

Through such madness and howling, I think I hear Glory:  
 crystal percussion, delicious and light.  
 I attend to this song and its rhythmic precision,  
 forgetting the tempest, ignoring the storm.  
 A song so seductive, expressive and lyric  
 made warm by the voice of the exquisite player.  
 He sings from a shore where no hurricanes howl  
 and the Ocean is gentle  
 with warm tides to wash him  
 and zephyrs to cool him.  
 No storm surge, no blood pools,  
 just sleep, plenteous sleep.

To gain such surroundings would I join the minstrel.  
 Were I to let go and flow out with the tide,  
 would the storm lay me down on his safe, distant shore?  
 So close, I can touch it, (my knee starts to buckle) so real I can see him.  
 He studies my posture through cavernous eyes,  
 awaiting my fall as his song beckons: rest!  
 Exquisite musician, you  
 sailing the heavens, I  
 must join your chaconne and travel the stars. . .  
 but not now, dearest comfort, not yet, great companion.  
 I'll stand and hold fast to each stick on the pier,  
 and I'll shudder as gales tear the flesh from my soul.  
 Yes, I'll stand in this place, and these storms I'll survive,  
 for I, unlike you, will sound best when heard live.

## III. Transplantation

Frozen seeds raised from slumber,  
in viscous suspension  
that causes its chalice of white  
to turn silver with sweating.

Through mist, a hand reaches  
to force the cold slush through my heart  
where it thaws, giving life  
to omnipotent forbearers.

Past lungs, neck and head, they swim  
homeward to spawn. Some seeds  
lost in the tumult. A few, precious  
few find the marrow bed.

The icy elixir is  
searing my core; stench pervades  
every pore and it sickens  
the angels who soothe me still.

The vile juice conceals its  
rescuing power: it is  
my sole hope. This foul fuel  
from my past is my future.

## IV. Acts

Who is this man?  
Whose hands once pressed  
A young and fragrant flesh  
To coax its anxious passion forth,  
Now mop a tepid brow  
And cradle a rank and bed-sore frame. . . .

Who is this child?  
Whose laughter rings  
Across the swamps, the hills and fields,  
And smiling image hovers  
Above the unhappy indisposed  
To bless the failing heart to strength. . .

Who is this friend?  
Once dressed to play  
In sharing give and take,  
Whose quiet vigil guards the weak,  
Who washes sanguine, soiled garb,  
While asking but a hand to keep. . .

*And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other  
tongues  
As the Spirit gave them utterance.  
The multitude came together and were confounded  
Because that every man heard them speak in his own language.  
And they were all amazed, saying one to another,  
"What does this mean?"*

## V. Restoration

Snow is falling,  
beautiful snow,  
each flake unique and delicate.  
They gather, they stick,  
they grow in number.  
Winter's frost  
bared the earth,  
now her snow  
caresses the land.  
Its rough places,  
smoothed,  
valleys quilted  
in snow.  
Copious snow,  
storing promise  
that thawing will  
nurture the Spring.  
*Res miranda!*

Smug in my relative  
leukocytosis,  
washed in joy and delight,  
I smile,  
I glow,  
I rest me content.  
Road winding  
before me,  
I'll travel tomorrow.  
Tonight's quiet  
I savor.

If intellect dwells  
in the brain,  
if love is what  
comes from the heart,  
then it's strength  
that grows in  
the marrow.  
*O magnum mysterium!*