

THE MAGIC MAN HELD A BLUE CRYSTAL BALL

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1.

He had uncovered hints of blue
 marbled patterns of wings and hands
 buried in prehistoric fetal mounds
 by pitchfork at the end of the world
 caught in a circling pool of stars.
 He was a local man in a small town
 without a memory of his past life
 determined by birth and circumstance
 to find his exact image in a blue mirror
 and extract every single drop of blue.
 He devoured a certain kind of blue:
 clay, bird, schoolhouse, elbow, stove,
 thunder, old brown shoe, guitar, flame,
 frostbite, anvil, tongue, and cancer blue.

2.

What was the circumference of blue
 on the tightened knot around the neck
 made smaller by the chameleon
 on his forearm turning blue who lived
 for months without light and air
 under the webbed shadow of the rock?
 He threw off his red and gold suspenders
 as a young lad for a fine blue vest
 his newborn glow for a blue plaid shirt
 and found a red claw for the color of his eyes.
 Was heaven's pine board door
 repainted purgatory backyard blue
 to assist those gnarled souls who crawled
 forever half alive and half in hell?

3.

Each morning he dipped his hands in blue
indelible ink until it swelled inside his body
and his eyes turned skeletal blue
as he felt his rapid pulse fade
and placed his swollen fingers
into the well of the artful gods.
He separated the blue tint from the blues
and recognized how his radiator lungs
expanded in the wreckage of fire and ice
limped and bruised in his waking hour.
He rubbed blue ash into his body.
To heal his burns he slept naked
in a meadow where the green collapsed
and the animals stampeded.

4.

He told the world little blue lies
how the planets would fall at November's end
after the blue ocean ignited into stars
how he counted blue sheep and snored blue.
He shoveled blue manure into a pit
until his long blue snout sneezed blue.
The colors of the world were in his body.
In the vagrant hour he awakened
pulled off his shoes and wool blanket
and shed his gray apparel of flesh.
He lived in a time when the earth was flat
and blue was the color of small comfort.
The husk of rainbow in his bathroom mirror
dissolved into the cruel alchemy of blue.

5.

He worked magic on his one good leg
in a dirt basement carving his wares
on a butcher's table as he fed goose liver
to a blind goat with a human face.
He was known for what he made happen:
the baby carriages without wheels
floated for hours in the wilderness
to chamber music behind the hollow
as his elders formed in thin air and wept.
He placed the wooden leg under a pillow
until its raw knee jerked him awake.
He pulled on his leg as it smoldered
and splintered into a fine ash
as holy water poured over his hands.

6.

This was how magic worked in the field
 and crawled the steps of the altar stone.
 It broke out windows of the church
 and gutted a horse with one motion of his hand.
 This technique involved exact science
 bitter roots and noble charm
 and set a curse upon the world.
 The mouth of the lamb glowed in the stall.
 The woman's black gown and pearls
 danced above the lake water
 and they believed in what they saw.
 At the dinner table his handkerchief
 floated out of his pocket above the flowers
 took on her features and disappeared.

7.

There was little magic left in the world
 until he tapped the attic wall twice
 with his cane and birds fell out of the sky
 and his palm became the animal paw.
 Was it a mere coincidence or fate
 how the noose snapped into feathers
 and the stunned crowd rose to applaud
 when you were cut in half by magic
 with your bloated legs chained
 to a freight car at the end of the earth?
 He had no choice in raising his hand
 from the boiling water as the sky cleared.
 The animals jumped over the fire
 and he waved his cane like a magic wand.

8.

There would be no illusion tonight.
 After he relied too heavily on the future
 he worked to change the present
 to better fit into his past life.
 On this day a woman he met
 placed a bicycle on the lawn
 and pulled worms out of the garden.
 She was wearing a cross and a veil
 as she left the cafe and was last seen
 boarding a train to receive a stolen gift.
 When he was a young man
 who left home dressed like a carnival
 and fell asleep inside a yellow cab
 he was suddenly made whole by magic.

9.

He placed his knotted hands
over a smoldering world
until the pink clouds formed
into a volcano of black flies
and he stared for hours
into ways the world might end:
the earth opened or the invisible arrows
brought the cities down or the chain
snapped at the gatekeeper's throne
or the lighthouse candle blown to ash.
There was the wonder of a spinning globe
between his hands as he watched
the crackling robes of the boy's choir
float like crows above the smoke.

10.

What poise he kept over the marbled light!
One half of the world on their knees
one half left standing in caves
as they coughed and bled into bowls.
Had the world been parceled by chance
left in his hands to ponder
the riddle of the sky falling
landscapes burned and divided by nations
and maps without rivers and towns
or evidence of human remains?
He had seen the underworld rising
slowly to the surface and he paused
above his mother's breast and father's eyes
as the meteor dimmed across the sky.

11.

They were not able to observe
how a constellation born at night
changed from a mist into planets
and how weightless they felt in his hands!
What would they have done
if they had known the exact time
the waters would rise above the mountains
into the pit and hunger of gravity
and the mutilated days ahead?
He looked into a wishing well
the way one looks into a fire.
He walked out of the mountains
with a pitchfork and fool's gold
and carried the ball into the city.

12.

He placed the crystal ball into a trough
to lower the temperature and heal
its discolored and vacant rooms.
It only darkened in his arms.
There was neither fire nor ice
in his hands for several weeks
until a spot appeared in its window
and grew larger with each rotation.
The future stalled in his hands.
He fell backward into the underworld
as its broken light burned his eyes.
Posed for one final act of war
armies left their homes into the bloated wind.
This is how the world began.