

## **Nineteen**

*(Some time later. The church. The preacher and the traveler. The traveler eats.)*

P: you can stay as long as you like.

T: make me some show?

P: (just) offering.

T: no thanks.

P: wouldn't mind.

T: know these towns. Know how they work.

P: not all...

T: all towns, all towns are the same.

P: change.

T: hmm?

P: we could change them.

T: got your preacher hat on?

P: just me.

T: people love to talk change,

But then when they see change, they shut everything down.

P: history.

T: what'd history got to-?

P: teaches us.

T: the same.

P: different.

T: (are you) talking revolution now?

P: leveling of the spirit.

T: gonna write that in your book, put it in your next sermon?

P: matters of faith.

T: (*gently*) screwed up in the head.

P: ...

T: (you are) so screwed up in the head.

*The traveler eats.*

*Some time passes.*

T: where'd you get this (food)?

P: around.

T: make it?

P: yes.

T: lousy.

P: (*lightly*) I'm a shit cook.

T: (*lightly*) that your trade?

P: yeah.

T: could make it better.

P: you cook?

T: all sorts of things.

I'm really good with peppers. The green kind.

P: that *your* trade?

T: (*almost to self*) what haven't I done...

*The traveler eats. Some time passes.*

T: you know they can all go to hell, right?

P: who?

T: everyone. (in this town)

P: I've thought about it.

T: nobody'd care, anyway.

With all the violence in this world, they'd just be dust.

After a while.

P: is that how you see things?

T: sometimes.

Other times I don't know what I see.

Used to think my people would take care of me.

That didn't happen.

Thought my other people would take care of me.

They passed.

Ran with some other people, they took care,

But it got old, and after a while, I just wanted out.

Got on the road.

Country got no end to it.

P: I know.

T: yeah?

P: been.

T: Swear. Sometimes you walk and it's like

Twenty motels and a fuel stop

Every few miles.

Wanna scream at everything, 'cause it makes no sense.

Other times, it's like this, that n everything all scrunched together  
Like people didn't know what to do with themselves  
And just started building.

One time I got so sick of it all,  
I beat this animal clear to a pulp.  
My ass was in the hole in no time.  
P: sorry.

T: They didn't know what to do with me.  
I told them "leave me the hell alone.  
Walls and a window. That's all I need."  
Bastards made sure no window  
come between me and those walls.  
P: alone, then?  
T: I don't know what that even means anymore.

*By now the traveler has stopped eating.*  
*A moment.*

P: what was it like in ranch country?  
T: huh?  
P: ranch country.

T: thinking of going?  
P: maybe.  
T: Cold. Get yourself a good coat, some strong shoes.  
P: open skies, though.

T: down some road, just you and sky?

It's like the earth is gonna swallow you up.

P: I don't mind.

T: is that what you're looking for?

P: ...

T: (*slightly mocking*) oh merciful heaven, what kind of preacher are you?

P: regular kind.

T: yeah?

P: sometimes.

T: your sermons make no sense.

P: how'd you...?

T: been listening to them.

P: ...

T: think it's just the poor folks stuck in the church that got ears?

P: ...

T: there's a little space out back, near the weeds.

P: you can sit here.

T: (I) like the weeds.

(they) Remind me of home.

Back when I was a little kid, there was nothing but weeds in my town.

Miles and miles of them. angry pointy little fuckers.

P: ...

T: sorry.

P: the gods don't mind.

T: they say “fuck” too?

P: sometimes.

T: when I hear your sermons, I think no one ever taught you to pray.

P: what?

T: like, you got the words and the intentions

And I know, I know that’s half the battle, but you don’t have the spirit.

P: haven’t had faith in a long time.

T: didn’t say “faith.” Said “spirit.” Different thing.

P: same.

T: no. where I’m from, back in angry pointy land, spirit is a whole other thing.

P: ok.

T: don’t believe me?

P: it’s late.

T: been late.

P: I should go.

T: give me your hand.

P: ...

T: what am I gonna do to you?

Beat you like that animal I did once?

P: don’t know.

T: they’ll just send me back to the hole,

Back where everyone here wants me to be

Fix all your problems, right?

P: don’t know.

T: (you are) so done with life, you can't even let spirit in.

P: not like that at all.

T: give me your hand.

*After a brief moment, the preacher does so.*

T: trembling.

P: I'm not.

T: your whole being.

P: ...

T: what's going through you?

P: nothing.

T: like you're a glassy river.

P: let go.

*The traveler does not.*

T: all this time, you're giving and giving  
wearing the face of serenity and kindness  
when inside you are raging,  
your halves fighting with each other.

Is this how you live?

Is this your spirit song?

P: don't...

*The traveler casts their spell.*

T: take the spirit of me in you.

Take the spirit of me into your heart.

Seek the grace of another

Hard fast upon the liquid plain.

This trembling river

Will take you into your own country

Into the history you've named.

P: what are you-?

*The traveler prays, making their strange, animal music. And then...*

T: grace of the gods

Four hundred and twenty-one thousand

Coming into being

Coming into life.

This is the call of all witness,

Through the shivering rock

Of whispers and cries.

Give this one peace

Render them light.

*The traveler blesses the preacher, perhaps with an embrace.*

*And then, the traveler becomes a bird-like entity.*

*The preacher is transfixed.*

*The bird-creature flies toward the blue window of the church, straight out into the sky.*

*The preacher weeps.*

*Their tears flood the church, and shake its foundation.*

*A great sad rumbling crash of wood slats and stained glass upon the ground*