



A DROWNING IN SUNLIGHT

- 1 Scarcely I slept, restless and fitful / Tossed ashore by oneiric tides / Waking, walking, sand in my hair / Blood shivering in the dark
- 2 I have held my heart in my hands / Tested its sustenance, useless and cold / Crouching among the circle of stones / Flickering stars merely pinpricks of regret
- 3 Dreaming — the stark and sunlit threshold / Over and over — slipping closer to the door
- 4 I transmute delirium to substance / Dripping with sweat, cursed and feeble / I cannot recall the form of a tiger / The fragrance of wood, the slickness of deceit
- 5 I reject, I deny, I lament that which I create / Curling inward, cowering from light / Lurching from idyll again into ruination
- 6 I drag my raft by night to the current's edge / Shoreline strewn with glass, like fistfuls of teeth / Cast upon wine-dark seas of time / Over the scuttling things that wreathe the innards of the earth
- 7 Behold the sum of man, behold the price of rest / One forbidden sight, one familiar sin / To soar into the sun, to crush that which you hold most dear
- 8 I have felt its breath in my sleeping mouth / A bitter taste I cannot coax or reproduce / Now, dragged into the moaning daylight / I feel it slip forever from my trembling hands
- 9 For each attempt to produce a form in perfect structure / The more distended and grotesque my progeny / I resign myself to slump at last into the pyre / But with relief, with humility, with terror I am unharmed
- 10 Steady my hand, light of the morning / Denuder of self, destroyer of all, deposer of kings, diminisher of man.

Un hombre se propone la tarea de dibujar el mundo. A lo largo de los años puebla un espacio con imágenes de provincias, de reinos, de montañas, de bahías, de naves, de islas, de peces, de habitaciones, de instrumentos, de astros, de caballos y de personas. Poco antes de morir, descubre que ese paciente laberinto de líneas traza la imagen de su cara. —JLB

AN APIARIST

- 1 Ordered, golden orchard of budding umbilical pathways / Groomed and manicured with subservient hands / We few custodians strain in restless industry / Cloistered within stark and feverish walls
- 2 Mask, tool, and smoker shouldered in labor / A daily pilgrimage of excremental mud / Toward the shrine of squat and droning hives / Clockwork wings in swelling chorus
- 3 I had begun to loathe the trees in their luster / Blooming perpetual, incense and sulphur / Fruit dripping from gnarled, alveolar branches like the limbs of a sunken and tubercular harvest queen
- 4 Once I rose in stealth to walk by fading starlight along the edge of a sleeping canal / Peering through the cataract of sweating, claustrophobic pre-dawn darkness smothering its banks
- 5 I knelt at the water's edge / Fixated on the silhouette / Reflected in the onyx surface / As it shuddered slowly into form
- 6 Faint glow caught like a handful of bees, stinging, dead in my palm / Great soiled aurora advancing, slick like oil smeared across anemic skies
- 7 Its luminous tendrils slithered across the rooftops / To light this boundary, a curtain of glass / The face that rippled, recoiling below me / The stricken visage of a familiar and monstrous parasite
- 8 I bent, weeping, to drink from the canal / The blood which I knew was of my host / Beyond the vein unfurled an open landscape whose exquisite austerity would not abide my existence.

"The bitterness we sold to the junk man—he got it all right, but we have it still. And when the owner men told us to go, that's us; and when the tractor bit the house, that's us until we're dead. To California or any place—every one a drum major leading a parade of hurts, marching with our bitterness. And some day—the armies of bitterness will all be going the same way. And they'll all walk together, and there'll be a dead terror from it." —JES

O TIME THY PYRAMIDS AN UNFINISHED NIGHTMARE

- 1 Stirring beyond an endless gulf of apprehension / Bent into the lurid autopsy of a mirror / Pupils dilate, malign and unfamiliar / As an arrangement of flies on a vacant windowsill
- 2 Lips dripping with bile and saliva / Hands that burrow, burrow through organ and tumor
- 3 Our bodies like a crust of roaches / Clot the earth's folds, rustling and filthy in this slowly-filling well of depravation / For the love of god, will you not lower me the rope?
- 4 Am I throat or the hands at the garrote? / A cyclic sacrament / Rejoice in the blessings of misery and death
- 5 Are we not lain under the hill of Prometheus? / Fallen upon the dagger, "thy handle turn toward my hand?"
- 6 The scar that precedes the falling of the blow / The open grave which prefigures every birth / I am the hand that wounds, I am the arch tower of guts and the arrow buried forever in its breast.

"Do you know, then, who the others were, those you knew not the slightest about, who you once brought into your home at midnight and lay next to you like a good old lover? Did you perhaps know where they came from and where they went? Did you know which coffin was their daytime lodging before they came to you and after they left you?" —OAHŠ

A REPULSIVE ACT SHROUDED IN FLESH

- 1 An insect lands, black and ugly / On the cool expanse of her forehead / Ashen legs dangle, shoeless / From the rippled shade of a culvert / The sagging trestle groans overhead / And melts away into the slinking fog
- 2 A whirling tumult of rats squirming and tangled / Enraptured, all fucking and whelping / Squealing pink and twisting crown of worms, beckoned by a cool and nerveless hand / Curled in a curious gesture
- 3 Crippled Athena, spring from your headless grave / Burst from the loins of a careless word / Foul golem, echo of an echo / A gut-fear seeping into daylight
- 4 Flawed in every facet / False in every aspect
- 5 A peeling skull / A hall of mirrors / A twisting scaffold / Its drapery degloved
- 6 Fraying and endless wound / Meager and threadbare quilt of daybreak pulled over the all-abiding nightmare / A place where time revolves and eddies in a filthy slough, to lap forever against her milky scalp
- 7 Compelled, as if drawn upon a silent string / The insect stirs again, and crawls toward her eye — wide now, uncomprehending — and it begins to lay its eggs.

"What deity in the realms of dementia, what rabid god decocted out of the smoking lobes of hydrophobia could have devised a keeping place for souls so poor as is this flesh. This mawky worm-bent tabernacle." —CM

A CROWN OF ASPHODEL

- 1 An isthmus, a glacier, a vast and sullen desert / A mossy haven seared to stricken tinder / A homeward vision perpetually distant / A precious body crumbled to dust in our hands
- 2 Desperate stewards of a fast-eroding levee / Hobbled crabs tracing circles in the sand / We reach, lunging useless at her shadow / In confusion as she recedes like the tide
- 3 The lurch of vertigo on the precipice of cold nostalgia / Crumbling facade of the present clutching at our wrists with hands made of ice
- 4 In every star a hungry and wandering ghost, in every heart a churning mass of worms
- 5 For such a fragile lie we thirst, we convulse / On our knees as penitents in a lake of dust
- 6 And she wears her crown of asphodel, slick with dew, though they grow at the mouth of hell.

"He who sows in flesh reaps bones."

Drouth:

Matt Stikker - Guitar, Vocals, Lyrics

John Edwards - Guitar, Vocals

Patrick Fiorentino - Drums

Tyler Wolfe - Bass

All songs by Drouth

Recorded & mixed by Fester
at Stop/Start & Haywire Studios,
Portland, Ore. MMIX

Mastered by Ryan Foster
at Foster Mastering, Portland, Ore.

Artwork & layout by Matt Stikker



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