

Barbelo in a Pink Dress

Walking back to the white farm house,
He laid His denim overalls
on the crustily painted porch
and cried to Himself a little.
He put the kettle on the stove
and poured hot water into a mug.
He had loved His daughter
more than His son, and every time
the mailman comes, He leaves
out cookies and milk for their journey home.

When His wife died, He left out cookies and milk
for the coroner, and swore He saw her
in a pink dress picking soybeans.
And in between each row of soybean,
dried out worms huddled around
their final resting places-
dispersed mounds
of dust and dried out dirt.
He swore He saw her in a pink dress
puttering out her last breaths with dust coughs

and letting the soil and worms
sift through her cracked fingers, cracked
like the land He kept in place from day to night,
kept in place like the children
who saw bright constellations
spread out above the cornfields,
locked in their rooms at night.

Carrying candles and wearing white nightgowns,
she unlocked the many doors of the house
each morning before the rooster crew out.

His daughter crawled down the stairs
where He had left out milk and cookies
on the coffee table, and she cried a little
when she saw the milk on the coffee table.

His son would cry out in the night time sometimes.

“Fairly often I have nightmares
where You come home from the field
and (statistics show that suicide rates
among farmers are the highest
of any occupation, dust sets
on a dying industry, but You had always said
it wasn’t an occupation, but a passing

on of rings engraved with family names)

but anyway, You standing there

under the staircase,

plaid sheets and Your father's wicker chair,

and I asked You what You were doing there.

With a serene smile, You explained, and I asked You

not to kick the chair. You said

that it was for the best, I begged.

You kicked the chair, and plaid sheets

wrapped around Your twisted neck

and wicker chair sideways

on the flayed floorboards”

“This house is the body of this family,

the ceiling and the floor

the skin, and lampshades

and the air we breathe

the blood and vital organs.

When the wooden floorboards

scrape and bruise, keep your room

in place and then the ceiling

and the floor will meet

at the lampshades

and the air you breathe,”

and stoically, He draped plaid sheets
around His son's back,
and offered warm milk
and cookies.

Crawling in her pink dress,
she didn't look back towards him
to see the dry tears in His eyes.
The wheat fields at harvest times
waved goodbye to Him in the dust wind.

“This one's nice,
reminds Me when she
sat and let the locusts
gnaw at her legs until
she bled out.”

The paint chipped on the house
on top the hill, and fenced out
by crooked barbed wire fencing,
she cautiously bit her tongue
so as not to bleed out, distracting
her from the locusts biting through her socks.

“The chipped paint
and barbed fencing

symbolize the withered patriarchal
forces keeping her from the body
of the house.”

After the locusts came
the dust came, so thick that layers
on your flannels and your glasses
make it hard to see. Above the wheat,
the cyclones of flurries of soil
and hawks with wings wavering
under the pressure of the wind.

“We didn’t paint the porch
the summer that she died
because the dust
was so thick
we couldn’t see the rotten wood.”

The dust stopped soon after she had disappeared
from the canvas, and then the rains came.
Storm clouds above the field began to form
and what began as little drops of water
carried bits of oil paint all the way down
to the wooden frame adjacent to the restrooms.
Why did they install such a sophisticated
sprinkler system in the museum of modern art

in new york? Many paintings ruined,
oil paint and watercolors blurred together
on emptying canvases, three weary pairs of eyes
dart back and forth at the museum
of modern art in new york, three pairs
of hands grasp together, searching for an exit.
Him, His son, and His daughter rushing out
into the crowded Manhattan streets.

The streets were only slightly flooded when they left
and little brown bags littered on the yellow concrete
lifted themselves into the misty air, air that splits itself
into layers when beheld, and emerging between the heavenly
layer and the earthly ones, a white horse rode furiously
through the cobbled streets, a rider draped in black monk robes
whose earthly name was written on the tapestry draped
across the mane so as to blind both, and a heavenly name
only he knew, and if you asked him he wouldn't tell you it.

“you know you sent my mother to her grave
and raised us in the grave you dug for her
you talk of evil days and hands
but weave gently decorated tapestries
across our eyes”

She darted away from her father, climbing over park benches
and crumbling tenements as She weaved herself through traffic.
She bounced across water towers and almost stepped on city buses.
She climbed the wires of brooklyn bridge, and they pierced
into Her sides and forehead as She stood in a moment of clarity on the parapet.
She dived into the waters, was fished out,
asked the bartender for a free beer,
and he gently responded, "no."

But He had been watching all along from the tower of the brooklyn bridge,
laying himself out comfortably on a hippie rug, burning
incense sticks with his bic lighter.

He cried to himself a little when He saw
Her nosedive into the east river. He really had driven Her mother
into Her grave, and He felt his own grave beneath Him and His rug, but instead
of plummeting through the the undraped well contained
within the hollowed out tower of the brooklyn bridge,
He began to levitate. His head was crowned with a silk bishop hat,
and He found icons of the fall from paradise weaved into
his golden priest garments. This ski-masked magic carpet ride
above the bowery and slums, five cents for phillies
was what they paid below, but he had a gutted
and resealed cuban hanging off his lip, and his yellow teeth

morphed themselves into a twenty-four karat grill
slightly blackened by tobacco smoke, but made
sufficiently flowery by the greener smoke, but the kind
of flower that stings the soul and still gives you lung cancer. The wires
of the bridge turned yellow, the river water browning too.

He soliloquized to the ashy wind,
confidently: "I know there are those
kneeling under mother mary
pleading yahweh for my downfall
and concurrent destruction.

But I've seen the rabbi's light
before the white horse and evil deeds,
so if You ever mention Me say subhanahu wa ta'ala
cause I see both sides now like anekantavada.

All those souls I spent to drench myself in fent-laced prada,
and You were under bridges burning spoons till they were black,
but I was drugging wells before benito wore balenciaga."

With the the tassels of the rug rubbing against
the brown water, He slid above roads and bluffs
and powerplants with yellow smoke
and little trees were blurs until He periodically
lowered His altitude and brushed His feet

against the leaves. He spent almost an eternity
until He found the garden where He first laid eyes
on Her pink dress, and He cried a little to Himself
when, hovering above the farm house,
with paint just as crusty as He remembered,
He saw himself at the end of days, cracked
fingers crumbling into the ground, sitting
in His father's wicker chair, and the son
He loved less than His daughter
draped plaid sheets around His back,
and walked out into the sunset,
leaving only skeletons
to keep the land in place.