

Church of Storms

by [Bobby Parrott](#) (January 2024)



Volcano at Night– Jules Tavernier, 1885-89

Church of Storms

Behold the turbulence,
harsh and relentless.
Wind unstrings history
to release your body
layer by layer, approaching
the placid eye of its truth.

Clothed in the down
of eaglets, we refuse
to embrace the falling
outside. Within
the hurricane's eye, we fly
hard in the face

of forever. The altar's
bottomless clock
strikes Never. The faithful
build towers. Our words

runneth over. The church
has no doors. Surely

as a solitary bell unclasps
its iron voice, the Nothing
speaks. You die here.

The Lord of Shards, our Infinite
Mother, disrupts your tomb,
a murder of well-armed angels

erupting in magma disgorged
through the spinal column
of Vesuvius. The raw honesty

of killing! Seven times
our High Priest
sings your time-bound name,
while seven portraits
burn, an effigy to the roar
on the other side

of silence. And finally, our priests
wax cumulous, float starward,
gravity's oppression meaningless.

Softer as Time

The twenty-dollar gold piece
mints a raised eagle
into my childish palm

as the concussion
of the locomotive's piston
arm loosens bolt after rusty bolt.
The smoke box face
comes apart. Its single eye
drifts into a dementia
where ones become twos,
rose begets blues

and the monstrous machine
lets go its voice—
steam-calliope screams
that gobble a wobbling world
to ribbons. Painted blind,
the carousel horse under me
orbits the ride's circular platform.
New balloons

brush the engine's face softer
as time unwinds
in puffs of white steam.
I'm frightened. I want
my father to pluck the Lionel
engine off its tracks, cradle
it in his arms, tease me again

into loving it. Golden-Book Tootle,
childish locomotive, leaves
the tracks to play
in the daisies. My mother
twirls the pages further
to where the conductor strolls
down the aisle, spin-flips
me the thick gold piece. It flashes

through the train's air; I reach up,
catch it mid-spin. Now my little hand
warms the coin my father

gave me most of a century ago—
or no, wait, was it today?

On the White Water of Astonished, You Drop Your Paddle and Surrender

The admission of light as it widens an iris, feathery sphincter liquidly altering aperture so an organic lens can bend beams into an image, a sort of map of what's out there. And the photovoltaic screen of the retina's resolution of rods and cones encoding a language of impulses through optic nerve's pathway back to galactic bundles of correlatives we call brain, that swarming, electronic limiting valve.

Like the way this poem flexes its neuro-linguistic constructs, aligns forests of ovoid pathways, performs alien symmetries into being. A smile, that cartoonesque doorway to sexual oblivion. When you peer directly into someone's pupils, imagine a conduit of shared birdsong, but then don't look away. Swim the watercourse clear back to the impression of self and peep into the collective brainstem screen we've conveniently a

Go with it until you hear the sound of sheets being torn, the sound just before a lightning strike, Tinkerbell's searing sister to thermonuclear detonation immediately preceding the end of the world. It's here. Don't miss it, because it's already happened, continues to happen, will never happen. How can you tell someone they're playing a role in the uncanny vestibule of a non-lucid collective reflection when they insist on confusing inside with out? How can you tell them to wake up, that they're no longer the protagonist in their own life, that language represses even the most idyllic childhood before love can possibly intercede?

Every mask I try on at the air show speaks in the voices of Rilke's terrible angels, the Sublime proximity of hyperspace,

negation of hubris. Is this where beauty meets terror, a sort of sexual Armageddon the Pentagon pumps up to pretend? Warfare as fireworks? Flat on my belly, I pull myself up the gravel path with only my eyelid muscles. I've never been helpless, just so often asleep.

We the Fused Warhead of Capital Gain

While our brothers and sisters the trees apply
to meet on the Zoom platform, their root
systems no longer offer enough bandwidth
to publicize the first-hand murder
of millions, as forests are excised. So
we inhale their platitudes, buzz-saw adjectives

into a softer medicine legally dissolving
housing developments we can no longer

quarantine. Wooden rattle of violin bodies,
the broken bassoon never getting its head
above the noise. Instead, we search hungrily
for our infancies, gold watch of corporate
reward dangling from one brave little finger
like a fish hook. Thou preparest a table

before me in employment of legions of soldiers
who walk mile-thick lines between a paycheck
and their next death. Swallowed whole and keenly
ever after we the fused warhead of capital gain

grip the religion steering-wheel, white-knuckled,
ever thankful. Forced war machines grow

mega-dollar bank accounts, impale rare species,
fly thru memory like ghosts: venom-tipped

missiles that mark all our childhoods past-due.

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Bobby Parrott's poems appear or are forthcoming in *RHINO*, *Tilted House*, *Whale Road Review*, *The Hopper*, *Rabid Oak*, *Phantom Kangaroo*, *Neologism*, and elsewhere. In his own words, "The intentions of trees are a form of loneliness we climb like a ladder." Immersed in a forest-spun jacket of toy dirigibles, this writer dreams himself out of formlessness in the chartreuse meditation capsule known as Fort Collins, Colorado.

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