

Brightly Wrapped Beneath The Tree

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For everyone who ever held
another man between their knees

1

Leonardo's Dream

Driving home from an out of town job with his coworkers, Leonardo fell asleep in the back seat dreaming of shoulders and the curves of young muscles around upper arms as they tie into backs and arch down to full asses and hard thighs and the calves and the ankles and white marble skin.

Coworkers chatted amiably.
Trees and countryside passed by swiftly outside of the window.

Although his body did not stir outside, inside Leonardo was forming the perfect man with his hands and his chisels and blow after blow of his hammer and tool.

In the villages,
they passed children playing stick ball and tag.

In the fields,
they passed men who had tanned leather skin and smelled of days of perspiration even though they'd bathed the night before.

All of them filled his senses
as he passed by in his dreams.

Even with his eyes closed
and in dreamland, each and every one of

them touched back into his corneas and leaked into his brain as visions of the once and future boys and men that he would carve again when he got home.

There would be laments to loosing Jesus.

There would be brief praises to the patrons who had paid the bills.

There would be more sweat spent on these boys than the real ones in the fields and streets, and it would smell so sweet.

And when he was finished, there would be a sigh like no one had ever sighed before, and he would lay among the rigid bodies and extol the virtues of virginity and chastity and semen crawling down his leg to find the ground and sneak off in the night to find the muscles he had dreamed of in the light while driving home with coworkers that day.

2 My Dream

There were brownies at Johnny
and Jennifer's housewarming.
After dinner and desert, we
smoked and talked and napped upon
the floor. After dreaming of
forests of black and white trees,
and wharves full of sailors who
came on the seas, while Richard
and Mimi Farina were
singing of letters to Jesus,
a vision of this man, who
(dressed like the trees: Black and white)
lay with his belly upon
the soft ground and humped Mother
Earth to her rhythms beneath
the black clouds in the sky, came
to my sleep shuttered eyes.

But that was years ago, and
I no longer smoke or eat
such brownies or take naps on
other people's floors. Imagine then
the way my eyes awoke when
I arose to find myself
upon your sailor's belly,
in your ground, and dancing to
your rhythms underneath the
great white clouds above the trees.

3 Your Dream

Every now and then I feel the hand of death reach out to touch me on the shoulder (just to let me know He's there). A chill flows down my neck and back into my soul. And as it happens, I inquire if I am at peace with the Lord. I hear a simple, "Yes." And I inquire, again, if I am at peace with the world. Comes the answer, "Not until I kiss you on your lips and tips and glands and hands and kiss you on your nose and on your rose." A quiet, gentle voice from somewhere outside me calls, low, "Your rose."

Within my rose, I hear you calling, "Yes."
And all around the silence echoes, "Yes."

4 Our Dream

In the night,
laying in the embers
of our last embrace,
asleep and dreaming
of each other's eyes
and smiles and skin against
our skin
(glowing in the dark invisibly:
No flame or smoke but
heat still left inside)
an angel flew too near to us
and stirred our souls
again with
only wanting to be
me with you
and you with me.

Awake.

5 Awake

Morning Glories freckle ashes piled out
in the backyard in a corner that I
used for burning trash last fall. Ashes laced
with green and blossoms. That is how I feel
when I'm with you: Remnants of the ruins,
lost out in the back of life, that somehow
have been laced with green and freckled with the
purples of your touches, every morning,
waking to the sunrise singing silently
of love and lust and helpless, helpless
touching in the night, lighted, turning
into smiles a while and being nothing more
than leaves and vine and flowers, scrawled across
the little piles of ashes from my past.

6 And On My Knees

I kissed your navel like a
Papal ring: Awe struck reverence;
Obedience; Humility
at being blessed beneath your
hand and scepter with such jewels
as all had never seen in
light of day before.

Just as surely as a host
of angels serenaded each
and every night that Jesus
lived his life of such perfection,
God intended (when He first
invented skin) that we should
lie together

in each other's arms again.

Let us drop to our knees and
consecrate this ground with a
blessing that the Lord above has
made inside of us to give to
one another and to have
leak out and drip upon this
sacred spot of ground.

7

Later On That Day

It was the fourth of July.

All day long across America
the citizens had celebrated with parades
and marching bands and families
having picnics in the parks.
And in the evening, after dark,
the fireworks filled the air for all
to see and hear.

Having spent the afternoon
alone,
(the two of us in bed)

and then returned back home
just as the rockets and red flares began,
I sat upon my porch rail in the darkness
watching spirals of the light above
and barefoot children here below who
scampered in the sparkles of the light
while mothers called, "Be careful.
You stay back," yet smiled about
the proud, proud day at hand.

And I smiled back about the day as well,
my chest hair blowing in the wind
and tender, touching rockets under skin.

8
At Night

As evening settled
over the house and the hills
around the valley,
and the trees began to sleep
(with blankets of the night), I

settled over you
last night and filled your valley
and the hills around
it with the seeds of seasons
past. Your flowers soon will come

as signs of love and
spring. Butterflies will soon come
too. On me. On you.
And everyone who ever
loved will be the morning dew.

9
Brightly Wrapped
Beneath The Tree

Jeffrey whispered in the dark,
"I love to hear you reaching
for the condoms and the lube.
The crinkling of paper
sounds like Christmas, and I
always wonder what my gift will be."

10 The Summer Storm

When it rained, we took cover
underneath a bridge: You and me
underneath the pavement, with
a couple of birds in the beams up
above us. As the waters fell
outside and rushed by in the stream
below us there, I said I hadn't
been under a bridge in the rain
since I was a kid. A truck drove
by above us, and the rumble
made us tremble, and you kissed me
on my lips.

It had been a hot and humid
day before the storm began.
Surrounded by the rain, the air
had cooled and blew against our skin
and kept us shivering. You touched
your fingers to my chin. Thank God
for the dry ground under the bridge
that afternoon, when you and I,
and those two birds, flew inside
each other's arms and wings again.

11

Death Chant

Creatures of the night, arise and prod us in the darkness to admit ourselves into our nightmares and our dreams. Making us to be the noises in the dark who shook our childhood stillness in the early years, please, instead of poking at our fears and making us to call out to our parents begging, "Bring some light into our night," now, instead, cause us to recoil to each other in the darkness, 'til amidst the moaning and the groaning and the squeaks of bed frames we become the things that through the ages have gone bump throughout the night. For ages have gone bump throughout the night.

12

Being All Alone

The long haired Tomcat was asleep on his back on the floor in front of the back door. I stooped and patted him upon his belly and then lightly scratched his chest through all his hair. He stirred and yawned and looked at me in passing. Then he shook his paws a bit, and leaned back up and gave my finger one small nip. I let him be. It was plain to see he didn't really want to have me bother him. And that was fine with me. I didn't really want his chest or his hair or his nibble on my finger. No, as

much as I would have liked to have you here to touch beside me, you were gone away.

13

Alone

I love to hear the crickets singing to the night.
I love the breeze to brush the leaves and rustle to
the beat of crickets singing. I love to watch the lights
across the valley flicker in the heat of summer
evenings. But, last night I sat inside and waited
for your call. It never came, and then I awoke
this morning having missed so many things I loved.

14

And More Alone

Sully had long and curly eyebrows. Once I asked him why his barber didn't trim them for him. He said he had no barber and cut his own hair. Sully had patches on his pants and shirts (on both his knees and elbows), and he died one night on his patches, while in prayer.

15

And Still More Alone

There were no tears shed at the loss of his touch.
There were no tears shed at the mention of his name.
There were no tears shed about how young he was
or how it happened much too quickly to appreciate.

But, talking about how they would have some tiny
conversations over breakfast or while currying the horse,
his face flushed red and tears ran down his cheeks,
and each and every one of them was looking for
a way to find the lover who had died.

16 And Dying

It is the same old sun and sky. It has
some clouds, and sometimes haze, but (always) it
is still just morning without you.

I am dying from the lack of your touch.

It is the same old sun and sky. It has
some clouds, and sometimes haze, but (always) it
is still just morning without you.

I am dying from the lack of your touch.

August has been long and hot and dry, and
all the trees have wilted from the lack of rain.
You've been away too long. It's been too long
between your water on my skin, or
flowing warm within, and now my heart is
dying from the lack of your white in the night.

17

But Every Heart Lives On

(People's bottoms stride
by all around me, remind-
ing my eyes of you.
Breezes nudge against
me as I'm walking, remind-
ing my skin of you.
Butterflies caress
the air outside the bedroom
window, only you.)

Every time I see
another person's face, I
wish that it was you.

Sweet meat. Sweet kisses.
Sweet wet from deep inside us
warm upon our skin.

Ah, to lay my head
upon your lap and make you
smile, laugh, sigh again.

Semen spring full blown
from deep within the bowels of
you and me and we.

I always wanted
you. But now, a pressed flower
in a book must do.

18
And On

My favorite memory
is the time we
(after courting for two
or three weeks)
wondered once again
which one of us was taller
and climbed out of bed,
barefoot and naked, and
stood against the wall
in turn and marked
each other's height.

Being second,
turning round to find
our marks the same,

and then, both laughing,
bent over and so loud we
echoed off each other
and the walls and rafters,
at our ever having argued over it.

Laughing, your smile was
bigger than mine,
your kisses sweeter,
all your touches
so much tenderness.

No. No, I take that back.

My favorite memory was waking
to the rhythm of some touches
as they echoed in my muscles
to find that it was you against my skin.

No,
I take that back as well.
My favorite memory was
when I asked were you awake
and was this real or
just a dream, and,
in the dark, you kissed me.

Yes, surely that must be my favorite memory.

19 And On

In the night, as we lay talking, what I wanted was to lay and talk with you. And when we touched, the only thing I wanted was to lay and talk and then to touch. And when we kissed, the only thing I wanted was to lay and talk and touch and then to kiss. And when I got inside of you, the only thing I wanted was for both of us to lay and talk and touch and kiss and

then to drift away with me inside of you and you around me sighing how you loved to lay and talk and touch and kiss and hold me deep inside you. In the morning twilight, when the first sprinkle of sunlight trickled on the roof and woke the birds and started them to singing, I awoke and kissed you in your sleep. And you awoke, and you and I were silently embracing.

20

Standing up behind
you, feet a bit apart, and
holding my hands to
your waist, I took your space and
filled it with the only love
I ever had to
give you. (And weakened you and
me in all our knees.)

21

An Irish Lullaby

I've been thinking about the time I had your dick deep in my throat and my fingers up inside your ass and, in the distance (far away from all the motion, smells, and lotion), I could hear a groan and moan and growling sigh from deep inside of you, and I could feel your heartbeats through the pulses against my forehead on your abdomen.

My fingers remember the feel of your insides breathing. My tongue remembers your touch. My lips remember your lips, eyes, thighs, and all your wet and white held tight. Jesus remembers us as angels in the night, glowing (down below him) in the darkness.

22

My belly cries, "Please
lay against me long and silent
as our hands caress."

It aches
for ripples
of the tickles
from your hand.

23 And On

If you were here with me, I'd hold your head against my chest and play my heartbeats just for you. Then, dancing to the rhythm, I would give you all my touch. But since you are away from me, I'll sing my song alone like this, and every word will be instead of heartbeats. Every phrase will be instead of touching you. So, this one is instead of kissing you upon the cheek. And this one is instead of touching you upon the neck. And this one is instead of still more kisses from your navel to your chest and then on to your lips. And this one is instead of laying with you, both our heart between us (just like flowers that are pressed between the pages of the bible) and caressing, every now and then, again.

And this one is instead of touching you throughout the night, even though we're both asleep and we don't even know that we are touching. This one is instead of kissing you awake. And this last one, instead of gesturing that you may go ahead, and as you pass, my stealing one light brush.

24

Leaning, Leaning, Leaning

He was old enough.
(Maybe only barely, but
clearly old enough.)

He was dressed in jeans and boots and plain white Tee and languid leaning on the light post underneath the artificial light. And suddenly he launched my heart into the many hardened fantasies: The winds across a hundred white capped seas; The thousand aching thrusts upon my knees; The millions and more millions of our seeds cast first in side of him and then in me. He'd been through this before, but he was not a hustler. He was just a young man who was leaning languidly outside of a convenience store in this small town: I leaned against the fender of my car and waited for the opportunity.

It came. And after we had talked a little bit, and he knew I was visiting from out of town alone and staying in the motel round the corner, I asked him if he'd like to earn some money with me there that night. He looked at me a moment, hesitantly (silently), and finally he asked me what I wanted him to do.

"Come on," I said, "how could you earn some money with a stranger to this town tonight? All right?" He followed me back to my room and there I helped him earn his keep to stay in that small cluster of night lights.

I knew myself down deep inside of him and him as he was deep inside of me. All from leaning languidly.

Some others might have questioned spreading seeds where we all know they will not grow. How little love they know. Surely they have never bounced an infant kiss upon their knee. Surely they have missed the blooms of love's sweet vine around the hearts of misery.

And so I had this young man in this motel in the night in this small town, and he had me. All from jeans and boots and plain white Tee as they were leaning,

languidly, against the light pole, underneath the artificial light.

25 And Beyond

Over on the other side, there are ghosts of oxen drawing ghosts of covered wagons westward fully laden with the ghosts of pioneers and their possessions. When we look out of our windows and see yards and shrubs and other houses up and down the street, with concrete driveways, they see plains and sky. They think about the Indians, who may attack again at any moment.

But no ghosts of Indians will bother them today or anytime to come. They are hunting ghosts of buffalo some ways away. And late at night, while all the ghosts of wagons will have circled round their camp fires, all the ghosts of Indians will dance and chant of how the hunt has gone that day.

Here and there, transparent children all will kneel in prayer before they go to sleep. And everywhere the whispers of adults in love will crackle like the fading embers of a fire. Then the howls of wolves will fuel the silence of the night for both sides now.

The living will have wondered if they've heard the dead. The dead will hardly notice they aren't living. The night will creep along in lonely strides. And when we all awake (from dreams of one another seeming so un-

real), the sunlight will confide that it was true.
The waters of the pond will ripple with
our skipping stones. The air will rustle with
the fall of autumn leaves. And underneath
our feet, the ground will just repeat, "Dig deep.
When you are planting all your seeds, dig deep."