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The Deathly River

Death lines these streets
like the silt from the floods,
silt that flows from river breast
to furnish the need for another birth.

Death lines these streets
like the silk from the worms,
silk that flies from larval rest
to clothe the limbs of another earth.

Yesterday's dead bridge undulates
like the heavy warmth of the evening
deep from the heart of dead summer.
And when we cross, the river

springs to its death like a bird
tired of its waiting for the rains
tired of being named without a lot.
The death of the river dissipates

the shadow of death that the bridge breaks
much like the dead that lines these streets
much like the silt that flows with the flood.
And all that there is to the land then left

is another birth with a leap that is cleft
into two and three with returning wrecks
of itinerant life in dead retreats.
Much like the silt that flows in the blood.

The river flows with blood, as they say.
The blood that flows in the river every day.

The Grave

Whose grave this would have been
is something you or I do not know.
Now that the sun has bared its fangs,
and the deepening shadows of the lane
have fled into a trail of spoilt berries,
let us wait, and observe how these stones
break with convention and speak in time.

The old man at the creaking well shaft
smiles and smirks with a toothless grin.
"Here is the queen with her sister lain,
the two smaller ones are who knows what!"
The younger man at the gentle mihrab
raises his head and smiles at us.
"It is said that it is the queen.
And all that we know that it has been
here like this for long, long years,
even before the forests here died."

Look, the threatening stones guise
themselves in sun and light.
And they gently pulse with a vision of yore
of sand, and woman, and bestial gore.
Maybe it is the horse's grave.
The one she rode to defeat on.
Or maybe it is her slave of a husband
who saw it fit to marry his lord.
The smaller two may well have been
just dogs or cats beloved of the queen.

The shouts in the yard after this
grow with the aping summer afternoon.
Gaping wide, the well at the gate
reminds us well of how it is late,
too late to know who lives there.

It well may have been
the defeated queen,
or it well may be
another's corpse.
The stones do not change
except with the light,
and in the night,
they are bits of the moon.

Rendered into this lane
like some forgotten Wain,
only worship being its sorry due.

And now we go to the loud of the day,
the gush of the streets, the pungent ray
of after-sleep and afternoons. The dome of ages
vibrant, manly, rises deep and duly rages.
There in the blink of sun and grime
the Queen so silent is lost in time.