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The Child-Man

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THE CHILD-MAN

A child-man wandered bare-legged down the reach
One Sunday early, lost village church-bells in his turnings,
Intruded where the gross seals floundered, each
Thin trail of sand-tracks leading him from home. The waves
Were white and large, that morning on the beach.

They towered, thundered, and in retreating shed
Sea-omens where he stood: great convex skeletons
Of sharks, flat rainbow fish, and stores of red
Transparent shells which speckled rock-weed in sharp gleamings,
As if a thousand passing gulls had bled.

The cormorants searched alone that morning, low
On sooty wings, adjusting unconcerned to gusts
Of sudden feverish wind that sprang from slow
And leaden clouds. The child-man, hesitating, watched
The flashing terrors of the under-tow.

But shoreline swooping quickened urgency
And drew him on, until the sand was rock and rock
Was cliff which walled a narrow arm of sea;
Blue shadows pulsed upon the further side, in moss
Which filmed the broken body of a tree.

The eddies glittered. No parent to deplore
The dripping legs, he entered coldness for desire
In crossing, barely heard the far-off roar
Of penetrating ocean, barely felt the lift
Of water seeking tide-marks on the shore.

Nor, sleeping later, saw the channel churn
With moon-convulsions, crushing wreckage on the reefs,
Nor woke with screamings of the mother-tern
Which nested at his head; but knew and understood
In quiet dawn that he would not return.

Instead became a king of wasted zones,
Wore sea-weed crowns, adorned himself with perfect stars,
Pondered in silence on high sand-dune thrones,
Reaching with tears for strange and half-forgotten days
While sorting graying pearls and smooth pale stones.

JOHN T. OGILVIE

AN OLD MAN'S GARAGE ERRAND

First, one of my old tires burst.
After that I just sat
In the car until the last star
Burned out . . . Five A.M. or there about.
The morning air was sweet. Right there,
Suddenly, in the glen below me
Was this cloud. Man, no shroud,
No birch log is grayer than fog.
Well, there was not one cloud, but a pair:
Fog gloom and apple orchard bloom. . . .
And the day just beginning to gray
At the mill and the high river hill.
I feel good because, from where I stood,
Part of sky was part of earth. Why,
I didn't mind the walk, though my kind
Stay in chairs. Now, you got any spares?

GLOYD CRISWELL