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Banquet

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Banquet / Andrew Glaze

Every day a banquet.
The sun would barely dispose of itself violently
behind some promontory or crag,
when the torchbearers would trot out
and the night would begin with the stuttering of fireworks.
Rockets hissed up and clattered around overhead
like a table falling over in God's dining room.
Then came the knockabout clown kermesse,
with the water balloons, the dill pickles
and burst brown bags.
After which the quail and the roost of gilded capers
the rabbit masque, the veal thank-yous,
the swirling of fish, the charabancs of beef,
the salads tossing and turning like whirlwinds in a hamper,
the rolls and the juggler tossing them
in a perfect circular stream with a dreamy smile.
They hung like a necklace of bread
about the neck of the moment.
And then the procession of maidens with figs and dippers,
the dwarves in syrup, with clappers singing,
the released thousand mocking birds
rushing to the zenith
to sing a perfect chorus of shimmering praise.

Then, flying on with the colored eggs and snap-crackers
and the bottles in garlands, the bronze-emblazoned poets,
the decades of flutists, the monkeys trotting on dogback,
the dozen dancers whirling scarves like circles,
and all about, the torches crackling and tumbling,
the flames eating fretwork into the leaves,
the smoke like a virulent brown tree—

Till at last the cake was towed in
with a squeaking of angels,

a trepak of trumpets
and the top burst open with a whiff of meringue and fluff.
Slowly out of it rose from the foam
a glittering pink Venus naked like a salmon,
clutching her rudimentaries with a coy aplomb.
And then it was ended with a spectral spotlight
clinging to her rump like a pearly tear.

That was the way of it as we remember.
Now we sit at a table of crumbs
with a used coffee cup and a soiled spoon
in a wilderness of stained and rumpled linen,
watched by a lean disapproving lackey.
He curls and uncurls his lip like Savonarola
about any minute to wheel the rest of it away.
Shall we curse him in scatological salvos like competition
spit on his ruffled sleeves
take his lace in our teeth
cast him in dirt, throw dirt on him
withhold his tip?
How much splendor can you replace with meanness?
No we'll watch in peace as he drags away the last saucer,
even flick a lying smile to him which he'll return.
We'll act as though we were giving each other a gift.

A Child / Andrew Glaze

“There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue
as pride . . . even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome
it, I should probably be proud of my humility . . .”

Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*

There was no way to give it birth,
no way to have conceived it.
Still, there it basked in the sun of your insides
like a camel.
It spat at your pyramids,
gorged all you ate,