

The Defeated Winner

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I met Rembrandt in high school, half-drunk on paint and prayer,
At Emmaus in the candlelight, with Christ still sitting there.
It was Holy Thursday somewhere, with the mourners half asleep,
And twelve Gospels fell like weather over shadows dark and deep.

The curtain by the royal doors was trembling white and thin,
The baskets held the anaphora, the eggs, the spring within.
An angel cried from the altar, Rejoice, O Virgin fair,
Your Son has broken morning from the kingdom of despair.

On Sunday afternoon I walked the citadel alone,
Past childhood's ruined miracles and squares of heated stone.
A thin sun boiled like memory above de Chirico's town,
And every street was asking why the risen Lord looked down.

Inside the old cathedral, students staged the Emmaus meal,
With borrowed robes and nervous hands, yet something there was real.
Christ sat weary at the table, with soft and tear-soaked eyes,
The conqueror defeated by the sorrow of our cries.

His hair looked after-battle, His halo cheap and worn,
His childlike hands were holding bread from resurrection born.
He seemed about to vanish after Scripture's final word,
Before the gifts were lifted and the hidden bells were heard.

But something held Him longer, not the actor or the art,
Not the priest who kept the building, but the fracture of the heart.
The risen One stayed seated, overcome by all we lose,
The victor by our falling, the Lord by our bad news.

Maybe He is sitting still in that cathedral's cooling air,
Breaking bread for every stranger who arrives without a prayer.
Maybe He will not leave us till the supper has been done,
The defeated winner waiting till the last lost child has come.