



Carlomar Arcangel Daoana \HEAVEN AND OTHER POEMS

Heaven

Pattaya, Thailand

Easy to think that this is a version of heaven,
Edged by tremulous sea and cruising guys
Who rely on night's bust-proof concealments.

To judge the men and women manning the bars,
The restaurants and the dark rooms upstairs
Is to miss the point entirely: they are bodhisattvas

Ready to administer to needful desires,
To offer fruits and instant answers to prayers,
And to garland ankles with kisses. They can heal

Any bodily disgust, problems of self-esteem,
So one may emerge from the spanked bed
with a renewed sense of self, the ache

Of the loins merely as an insinuation
For a new beginning. For a price, of course—
Nothing here is borne out of generosity:



POETRY

The electricity that lends the neon lights
Their sizzling fame has to be paid, the streets
Have to be swept so by morning they will look

Benign, benevolent. And those who work here
Night in and night out, who put talc on their skin
And unguent on their hair, whose dignity

Is water-proof, unprecedented, they can roam
The town entirely anonymous to others
of their purpose, the miracles they perform.

Someone said if you see the Buddha on the road,
Kill him. Here, you are asked to do something more
Permissive—without guilt, humiliation—

And afterwards forget: the twisted sheets,
The capitalism in the form of folded bills,
The crude tattoo that says *baby* on an arm.



Touch

It may be that the touch
Was accepted or perhaps
Even willed, a touch whose

Decide on the wrong-
Ness of it, may have,
In fact, permitted it

Other end was an adult.
Crime was too abstract
A word: I couldn't

Until my body tensed
And my unripeness
Retreated into the hollow

The Sons of this World

The sons of this world will rise up and kiss.
Weary of war, they will drop their weapons
And protective gear. Their ankles, smudged
With dirt, will be naked. Soldier to poet,
Poet to laborer, they will drink into each
Other's mouths until the lighthouses go blind.

All autonomous regions and sovereign states
Shall be filled with sharp, complex odors:
Musk, brine, ammonia. The air shall be explosive
With clotted presences. The sons of this world
Will declare allegiance to each other and make
A pact in blood: no need for treatise of tenderness.

The sons of this world will be brothers laying
Beside each other in bed—vulnerable, open-
Throated, democratic. They will gather
In stadiums, bathhouses, plazas to do nothing
But laugh, dance, and empty their cups.
The festivities shall spill over to the streets.





POETRY

Of my body and I,
In my half-sleep,
Shuddered awake.

Spilled over the house.
I felt my way out
And never came back.

My father was
In the other room,
Sleeping. The dawn

The sons of this world will aim for the target
Of nipple—ringed with fine hairs, goose-fleshed.
They will solve the enigma of earlobes with
A calculated swirl of tongue. They will be adept
At sending tremors deep into the bone,
A deep-veined throbbing, singular and immutable.

The sons of this world shall rescue for each other
The dragon's egg, the sac of seeds smaller than
Dolphin's teeth, the wrinkled fruit nestling along
The tremendous branch of their shared conspiracy.
They will not sack cities anymore for statues of Venus,
And this will make the gods envious of their pleasure.

They shall slip a terrible curse, polluting the wells.
The sons of this world will forget their beauty,
Their skin breaking into dark sores. Creation itself
Will be self-annihilating—a snake in a loop biting its tail.
Having perished young, their deaths shall cover
The four corners of the earth for the next millennium.





W

We are two men in boat,
Except the water resides
In the vessel, sloshing over

The curved porcelain edge.
Later, we shall have salted it
Into sea. The shower curtain

Billowing out, we put
The seven oceans to shame
For the distance that we cross,

Thanks to the Earth's
Magnificent engine.
The lamp throwing a towel

Of light by the bathroom door
We left ajar is our sole
Source of illumination:

You have always
Wanted it half-dark.
Here, your nakedness

Is the one thing permanent,
Total like imperialism.
I trace your ribs like

The ladder of a song
Whose final note culminates
In the hollow of your throat.

It's always been there, a gift.
To show our goodwill,
We barter kisses—

Lacquered boxes lined
With expensive of silk.
I open them like a rich man,

And each time I find
A scroll of paper written
With brushstrokes



POETRY

Of calligraphy.
What I understand
Is your name

You brought all the way
From Hiroshima
You press on the palm

Of my hand.
“Do I love you more
Than your body?”

Is not a question
But an instruction
So you row me toward

The borders of my skin
Taut with nerve endings.
We are swimmers now

Breaking surface tension.
Our pores glitter,
Our fingers prune.



Seven Torsos

I

Up there yours is the chest flung open like wings.
Even my mind fails to lick your magnanimity from that height.
Should I count the steps of the ladder of your ribs?
Your almighty wounds issue forth a valedictory. The vale
Of tears is struck speechless and emits an ethereal glow,
Black-and-white like a silent film. I have been there, once,
Grieving all the bodies I will soon lose over and over
Without fail, like a handkerchief of breath. Yours is the one
That will preside over them—an overlord—the divinity
Stolen into flesh. Your mouth gapes, and your language
Has turned physical, into honey. It trickles into my mouth
Like a long, sad song. Today I shift my focus and see
The light knifing into you. I hoard all the forgiveness
In this lifetime I can beg. At the back of your hands, stars.

II

From the treasury of your flesh my inheritance is forged,
Prosperous in the early years. It was an enormous room,
Full of working furniture, the memory of something once alive
And full of agency. Now only the clock's hand for seconds beats,
If only to show that time has moved somewhat. When I think
Of your chest—powerful and climactic, the hair around
The nipples demonic, despotic—adorned with a thick gold chain
Dragged by a rectangular pendant, it is being displaced
By my animal fear of you. I give off a sour smell. I bristle.
When you stretch your arms I sense that you are pulling
An admonishment quick to rise a welt or two. There must have been
Something good lurking in you or else your laughter that
Astounded that world was a fraud. Once you had been fatherly.
Now you are a ghost emasculated, blind, without grip.





III

After circling the sky for an eternity, a bird settles on a tube
Of bamboo, cracking it open with its beak. That sound
Rumbles till the ends of the known universe. Your sleep,
Lugubrious as sap, quickens and pours out to the visible,
Forcing your eyes open to the needle-pointed cones
Of light. After your head, first to emerge is your throat—
An immense well. Your shoulders tilting the sky into
Balance. Your chest emerging like manifest destiny.
The V of your pelvis. The terrific, indomitable fruit
Of your manhood. Your columnar legs instigating temblors,
Waves, weathers. Your companion—marked and indented
By a slit—is fully-formed and need no curve of bone
To be exemplified. You both have articulated yourselves.
Congratulations. You feel no shame over your nakedness.

IV

Always shirtless, your hair unshorn of its loose curls,
Carrying a sharp, manly smell, you command the house
Like a father figure, lumbering about with confident muscles
Finessed in childhood. You love watching late-night movies.
Your English is competent. You keep pornographic materials
In the space between the ceiling and the roof, which I manage
To catch furtive glimpses of. You have the name of the girl
Who broke your heart tattooed on your arm, her name within
A ribbon inside a heart struck with an arrow. Cousin,
I have had curiosity of your chest since I was a child.
While you sleep I see it rising and falling together
In conjunction with your breath, vulnerable and devoid
Of rage. I rest my hope on it sometimes. I trace the trail
Of fine hairs commencing from your navel with my gaze.





V

From the slit of the curtains I watch your chest take on
Water's illuminating assault. You howl and jump
From the cold. The light has a good coverage of you.
When you pour the dipper to your head your armpit
Shows off a strip of luxuriant hair. Your back reveals
The knit of muscles that hold you standing and spirited
Mere meters away from me. You are beautifully sculpted
By manual labor. Your fingernails are black with soot.
You are the first man I have ever desired, the first to have
Proffered direct to my lips your stupendous, raging gift
Of which I, in my adolescent solemnity, denied. It is the first
Of many I shall regret later in life. For now, I revel
In every square inch of your skin. I convulse with lust.
Blood roars in my ears. I am a voyeur of first water.

VI

Dear brother, your chest is the one true thing I love.
Not pristine forest or glittering beach but flesh, on which
Two nipples insist their helpless, pink blossoming.
It is the body I shall not touch or lick the salt out of,
Nor roam splendidly until the dawn shakes off the Milky Way.
But stare I can, from the clavicle to where your ribs
Interlock and enshrine your marvelous organs.
Your heart has the dignity of a pugilist. Your spleen
Is proud of you. Your kidneys are stalwarts. I count each
Of your vertebrae until I reach the base of your neck
After which I avow my solidarity with you over and over.
Miraculous that have I gone past desire. Alas, I wish
For you to be forever smooth, perfect. But it is not to be.
Which is as it should be, if the Earth should retain its gravity.





VII

You are a composite of all I have held and taken in by mouth,
Rising in front of me with your slender shape, with all
Its indentions and concavities. You bestow upon each
And every knot of my spine a radiant kindness. Your skin
Mottle scarlet with my touch—rare and extravagant fruit.
I wish I could match your stamina and dignity, the deep,
Intoxicating musk of you. But I have grown absentminded
And rickety. The moon outside turns, a rusty wheel.
The bed creaks. I catch myself looking at you with your eyes
Closed. But always, you soothe me. You usher me
To an enveloping space, snug as a body. You point to me
The inner fields shrieking with a carpet of tender, wild flowers.
You place upon my head a crown of fireflies. You pour
Into me all the syllables I need to answer back to the world.