

POEMS BY CHARLES BLACK

Selected by David Black

LOKI RETURNS OR REMAINS

Lurking winterspoilt Loki,
Revenant or remnant after Christmas,
Insinuates concerning a rose,

And this is no more than just,
For Asgard in general fire
Blazed up on Christmas morning,

Hammerhandle and all. Immortal
Steel must become immortal rust,
And only Loki, insinuating

Extinction of a wild rose,
Hangs about in front of the A. & P.,
Kicking soft leaves with sardine-colored feet.

AN EXERCISE IN MATERIAL IMPLICATION

I knew a man who ate something fried.
He died.

Another man ate chicken stew;
He died too.

The fellow who takes exercise
Dies.

I knew a case, and if you think I lie
You'll die.

KING TACITUT

King Tacitut, who antedated Moses,
Is never seen in more than two set poses.
Up from the Delta to the Cataract,
Tacitut was the name, and that's a fact.

He ate alone. (To mention it was treason.)
His annual bath brought on the planting season.
He donned a set of whiskers when desirous
Of playing, to his Isis-queen, Osiris.

No whit cared he for obvious defects
In his administration. Architects
Would sit for days in this receiving-room,
Discussing the appointments of his tomb.

Rain was a travelers tale. The sun would keep
 Shining, and when it set he went to sleep.
 He never walked; to get his legs apart
 Baffled contemporary sculptors' art.

One of those nasty medieval winters
 They fed his mummy to the fire in splinters.

THE END OF POLITICS

My tour of Washington, physical place,
 Wholly convinced my mind that all of this
 Will vanish, for any stone on any stone
 Will be unset, every building must fall down.

Jerusalem is one holiness over clans.
 Rome throws an arch to span all citizens.
 We must not palter, our debates concern
 What shall be left when everything is gone.

THE MAN BY THE CELLAR DOOR

They call me the super,
 Propped at this cellar door,
 In a detachable-collar shirt
 With the collar detached.

Folded, it steadies
 A table leg, but I
 Cannot bring my legs even,
 I am with whiskey drunken.

They have stricken my name
 Down at the Heraldic College
 On their rule that no gentleman
 Ever needs a shave.

My furnace is out,
 I am a hundred years old.
 For my numerous small crimes
 I am slack in suing pardon.

THE OTHER SIDE

To the magistracy of waters
 Icarus: "Your judgment
 Is altogether just,
 Being altogether of yourself.

But you saw only what you saw,
 The faltering outside moment,

The fluttering fall.
I would do it again.”

MINOR MASTER

Palicaducci kept the most of magic
In a trunk at home. He travelled on the train
Reading, impervious to hints of tragic
Histories in women's faces. Once, his brain
Project houris, but the sweating drummer
Took Tums and swallowed. Never one to meet
Or part, our hero spent the rest of summer
On ice, disgusted, past an asphalt street.

Locution bothered him. The Grail of Fury
Would fill, and that was it. He held his luck,
Scarcely in bowing distance of a jury.
His friends were few. They pestered him to chuck
The whole damned show. Suspenders never fit him;
He lived and lived and lived, till serpents bit him.

SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION

On a park bench, for reading without glare,
I try to hurry a cloud toward the sun.

At the beach, desiring a tan,
I wish the cloud to move quickly away.

Discriminable difference in my attitude;
None in the clouds. I call this Black's Effect.