

## NIGHTWATCHMAN FROM ZULULAND

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What hunch-back is this—  
 mutely guarding a Notre Dame  
 it does not know?

What monster is this—  
 with the heart of lambs?

What Adam is this—  
 lord in a garden of steel?

What manner of Man is this?

From Zululand he comes, a lion long tamed,  
 fed on the soul of warriors long dead;  
 Time—uncorrosive—like water on a Hippo's back  
 seals his fury from the light of day.  
 An oak tree in the desert parched and bare, he sits  
 conversing with fire and the dark.

With yawn of mouth scaled but firm, he speaks  
 of generations gone and coming.  
 Soothed by Bible smeared with blood, he sings  
 of voices crying in the dark:  
 with aching heart he smiles on Time and tells  
 of children yet unborn.

We know this man—  
 Zarastro's voice of him has told  
 op'ning fountainhead of justice old.  
 Stand up! see this warrior gird  
 o'er silenced storm of self and circumstance:  
 thus is truth born with virgin poise.

We know this man,  
 meeting him yesterday, day-after-tomorrow last year  
 'mid gurgling laughter of new born babes  
 and bulbous breasts of beauteous maids,  
 we parted at even-time, when elder men did gather,  
 encounter told through years of life lived long.

We know this man,  
oft in Ntuli's eyes we met,  
in craggy hills and knotted trees;  
Mahlabatini's sands his imprint bear—  
the Black Snake of Zibulus crawling bruised  
neath Egypt's blazing sun.

We know this man.  
By night, the forest hush of pines  
an aspect white does wear,  
distant hills resound with his love songs  
benumbing to youthful maidens  
shy beneath the waning moon.

History—  
drawn from inauspicious hours,  
counterfeit of Time,  
rends night from unsuspecting day,  
suddenly the glare reveals scars  
on this molested man.

The 'yellow-eyed-cave-cat' leers,  
christened babes, sired off  
Agamemnon's breed, take to flight,  
the withering bushmen stare the sun out,  
emptiness unheard, unseen—but not unknown,  
sits with this merchandised man.

Calloused eyes gleam with awe  
a spectred Hiroshima they saw.  
Oblivion sprawls unseemly  
around the city's rim; sterile ornament—  
a mock on this wretched man  
flouts reason, love and honour.

Children of our fathers walk not  
the path we tread. Lest in sleep  
you dream things vile and mean, Go home!  
leave us here to talk and drink with men  
who fought and died at Weenenspruit  
when Time and men were indiscreet.

Imprisoned destiny,  
 in shifting time revealed,  
 change—changing not—nor error  
 will amend, but potent hour present  
 incisive of the time; deride not searching mind  
 with peasant heaviness weighed down.

Never was battle fought twixt spear  
 and saracen tank—honour is defended  
 when men on men do feed. Seeking  
 not to justify, but to see, seeing  
 perhaps to understand, respond and create  
 of Africa's being in new semblance seen;

in others bound, we to ours are lost.  
 Our fury blights the soul. The mind—  
 parasitic, feeds the will and marks the 'arrogant wake'.  
 Being what we know, knowing not what we be,  
 how just is justice true?  
 Does truth of beauty speak?

Most secret visage—life in Time abounding,  
 soothe not the heart, quickening not the mind.  
 Mountains echo hoarse requiescat voices  
 valleys groan with guttural moaning:  
 we gasp from thirst eternal  
 for balm of this hour.

We know the Man. At dusk  
 the land of Him does speak—  
 a fine fellow, they say. We agree. Yes, we agree.  
 (Is he dead? No.) Inject him, we did.  
 Street sweepers have been here  
 this place looks clean.

We weep not for sadness, but joy  
 made sad by clammy hand of colossi invincible;  
 Galileo's world made square in mind hexagonal  
 paradise bleached  
 by anti-cosmic men—a world  
 iron-clanged in Time immeasurable.

Would that we could  
 with deictic violence short-circuit  
 this current of triviality, with David's lyre touch  
 the Sauls of today. In aspect pure  
 our love then would stand,  
 this woman—all women, this child—all youths;

loving, guarding and building  
 before and after their form,  
 a myriad faces lo! would sparkle  
 bright with hope—the health and wealth  
 of youthful clans, gay with song,  
 choralling love in Zululand.

Alas! we are blind,  
 either too young or too old  
 too uncommitted, too long wed to words,  
 too concerned with meaning to have meaning.  
 Forlorn, we stand apart,  
 impotent, we disdain.

Watchman speak  
 the sun does languish in the East!  
 "Come sit with me and learn  
 of fire reduced to ashes.  
 Come, sit with me and taste  
 of scalding water on parched tongue:  
 Come, sit with me and see  
 night shivering in awe of the on-coming dawn.  
 Come, Come—sit with me.

The children of our land  
 charged of me to tell,  
 I told them I did not know.  
 They asked me why?  
 I told them I was not to know.  
 They asked me what for?  
 I told them I am not to know.  
 But this—to all—I do tell,  
 Forward—we must move  
 With Truth of This Day."