



JACLR

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"Four Poems"**

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Four Poems

Pilgrimess

Arrayed in her white abaya, Badiyah treks
into wilderness, head bent against the wind,
regularly quaffing from a leathery waterskin,
reaching for pouched seeds and nuts
to fortify her for the wending trail ahead.

Searing grains redden her bare soles,
quicken her pace through barren vistas
of marl, sandstone, and silence;
she attunes to vocal wolves after dark,
worms of worry burrowing into her faith.

Afar, legless beggars loiter outside a gate;
she refreshes at the caravanserai, nipping
sipid mint tea to withstand desert chill
as the suave rhapsode concites imaginations
with age-old stories changed in the telling.

Daybreak greets her solitary footfalls
along the byway half-effaced by sandstorms
blasting her from the path into nearby caves
pockmarked and rugged, sullied by ash piles,
camel dung, and the musty stench of guano.

The bluster passes and she descends to merge
anonymously into the *tawaf's* sevenfold swirl
of whirling masses magnetized by belief.
She enfolds her frame in her arms, content
that her attire will someday be reused as her shroud.

Razzia

The convoy divagates through wasteland,
a bleak deathscape whose asperity
deters all but the most pertinacious
and enterprising merchants daring to defy
the elements and common sense alike.

Circumspect raiders crouching behind dunes
flanking the route sally with blaring war cries,
waylaying hapless traders and whelmed guards
in a fracas ruthless, abrupt, and grisly,
filching laden humps and rumps of their
priceless jewels, fungible goods, and rare wares,
reaping a windfall almost beyond measure.

Carcasses of the deceased obstruct the trail,
cameleers whose bloodied hands still cleave
to precious treasures, dromedaries with joints
and hocks sprawled athwart in soft dust,
a gory tableau unfit for the faint of heart.

Overhead a crimson sliver of sundown
bleeds and overruns the neutral horizon
to perfectly reflect the intimated mood,
sanguine for some, for others sanguinary.

An Estuary in Time

Puling whelps harangue silence's onset,
hailing moonrise on a sultry eve
by the rickety cantina whose barman
fills tumblers with mescal in slapdash fashion
while I, otiose and weary, eye a leaf-shaped
tray of lime wedges from my creaking hammock
under spiny palms bending in the breeze.

From this vantage point I oversee it all,

the quince and cactus farmers
sweating past twilight yonder in the field,
the gaggle of arguing locals,
the lady of the night whose active loins
beckon paramours strange or familiar,
the prurient letch short of coins,
even the menacing thief who perils
wayfarers' fortunes in search of illicit meed.

As the wind sougths through the boughs
I catch a whiff of coconut and avocado,
and listen to the staccato call of gulls
gliding in accord with the retiring tide.

I cannot account for the droll grin
shaping my face; I yawn as I outstretch limbs,
lithe and blithe, sensing the moment's
impressive presence and subdued glory,
thankful for the splendor of a fitting setting.

Hebron's Royal

Seven and a half years has he resided in his capital,
ancient site of storied forebears whose memories
slumber beside him at night, comforting if cumbersome,
their legacy a perpetual appeal to fructify and edify.

Heroized since youth, he shoulders expectations
lightly and with aplomb, misleading one and all
into believing he knows nothing of dread or sorrow.

He has the company of his wives, the strings of his harp,
and a talent for verses, balms for an anxious spirit
beset by concerns night and day.

When his kingship permits, on twilit eves and morns
he limns warm memories of the countryside's
glacises and planar terrain, its hilly ranges and tableland
liberally dotted with townlets of earth and thatch.

In his southerly citadel he is safe and at ease,
immured behind bulwarks of courtiers, officers,
and petitioners, upheld inside the edifice of faith;
recumbent on his bedroll and pallet,
he ponders what lies ahead, northward,
semi-distracted by the aromatic attar
scenting palace corridors and blending
with the fragrant medley of medlars, apples, and pears
whose sweetness ascends from stalls at street level.

From his rooftop terrace he espies quaint scenes
of familial neighbors beneath canopies atop flat roofs,
breakfasting on flatbreads smeared with quince jelly,

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sampling aperient prunes freshly purchased
as curious hoopoes swoop past in majestic arcs
towards the sepulchral Cave of the Patriarchs.

Upon consulting his prophets he will with dispassion
issue directives peremptory and jussive,
ousting scruples by recalling Samuel's insistence
on anointing his redheaded pate with oil from a horn,
not from a pitcher, so as to prolong a dynasty.

Come dusk, he with stealth forces will be underway,
entrusting destiny to sublime providence,
cosmic mainspring, wellspring of blessing.

Bioprofile of the author: Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his B.A. in Drama and English from the University of Toronto and his M.A. in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry has been published variously in over 85 publications in Canada, U.S.A., England, Ireland, Greece, Romania, Israel, India, Pakistan, Singapore, Australia, South Africa, and Nigeria. www.brandonmarlon.com.

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