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Patricia Goedicke, Robert Frost letter

Patricia Goedicke

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Dear Mr. Frost,

There are the poems I asked if I could send you the other day. I hope you don't mind my sending them.

Yours,

Patsy McKenna

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Dear Mr. McKenna:

You have something — something anyway to go on with if you care to. Development in art is largely a process of elimination. For instance, the first stanza of "Bulberrie Song" would do pretty well as a poetic idea except for the looped, pitched line "bubbling birchlight in a wood" and words "lovin'" and "cribble". "Now your lines are delicate as quailshines" is really it. Is that last "lovin'" really all by the tree? What you had in mind to come out with? You seem to have lost your judgement of which in general. The invention comes by best. Part of expectation for you derives from our letters.

Your friend,

Robert Frost
BUILDING

Thin house, your rising
Calls the twilight into wonder,
Brings the white new star
To listen at your scaffolding
Or cradle, pale, unclothed
Against the evening sky.

Tomorrow you must meet the whitewash
And the clapboard; now your lines
Are delicate as guillotines, or starlight
In the uncompleted night.

Tomorrow all your waiting will be done,
Thin house, but in your kitchens you will think
Your own upholstered thoughts, stillborn
Upon the altar of the sun.
THE QUESTION

He went insane this afternoon they said
And laughed,
Their mouths red holes
In jerking faces as they told
How in the normal room
Of dead
White cups and plates
And shrieking conversation
He had much too loudly asked the question
How are you sir
How are you sir
How a
are
you
sir?
Pulse beat of worlds
Deep seated in festering
Jungles of green corruption
Tum tum
Ta tum curls
In the throbbing
Wound of the night
In the light
Of parrots pea-green
Syncopating
The jibbering
Screaming of monkeys
Ta tum ta de dum.

Then with the beat
Blooms slowly the slumbering
Orchid in pearl-purple
Shadows
Voluptuous, sunk
In its flaming
Lavender noon.
So grow
In rank glory
These passionate
Petals deep veined
In the velvet of sleep.

Cave of the sea
Green weaving the emerald
Rhythm of dreams descending
Your secret
Sad queen whispers long
Calypso; holds
Murmuring worlds
In the curve
Of her arms; sings soft
Through the sea
Throbbing echoes
Of orchid wreathed drums.
DIRECT REPLY

Fingering wind
  touch gently the hearts of the lonely
  lost in the pitiful

Wonder behind
  closed doors why only
  they are without

Direct reply
  do not give them but slowly
    and always

Repeat their cry.
  You too are lonely
    Yet shout in the stars.
SONNET I

My soul is in the edges of my flesh
Oh Lord, come swiftly with the summer sun
And burn me into fall lest I should wish
To warm myself forever in the sun.
Let fall be quick and red as crimson drums
To march me briefly through such apple winds
As these that make me long to stay; then come
And blow me brittle into winter winds.
Here let me freeze a thousand nights of grace,
My wanton body scattered over fields of ice,
Of ice, my soul escaped from flesh to praise
Your furthest presence, where above white fields
Your face appears in suns so small, in skies
So cold that I must shut my sensual eyes.
SALVE REGINA

(in a Trappist Monastery)

Hollow hollow voices growl
In broken edges down
The smooth brown walk to Her
Whose roses turn men mad
For solitude; the grim unwhispered
Silence of no word.

A dawn in May. The bleak bell
Rings; they wind, across brown
Sullen hills striped white
With snow streaks melting to
A bird song; twenty gowns
Tied meekly in the middle.
The bearded voices chant within the walls
On this one day to May and roses
Which have yet to bloom.

Black black the hollow cells
From which these howls
Sear harshly like the voicelessness of beasts;
Brown tongues which tear the useless nap
Of voices frayed beyond repair.