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The Garden of Earthly Delight

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THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

after the triptych by Hieronymous Bosch

1. *Paradise*

Fowl & beast skirt our feet.
I float sexless—

porcelain doll
with eyes that open

& close. Please,
no half-swallowed frog,

legs pitch-forked
& helpless

in some bird's unnatural
mouth, no

feral cat's
dangle-jawed mouse.

This hunger, his gift to us—
the animal appetites

as yet unnamed, our own
still unacknowledged.

Songbirds spiral
& swarm like bees

smoked from a honeyed
hive. A warning.

2. *Fallen*

Rose-bellied finches
larger than man.
Eyes like a dansom stone.

Stripped bare
& plumed emergency-
bright, my lips

feather & fledge.

The egg's open skull a bed
wide enough for all.

Rinse my palate
– mouth-deep in red –

strawberries
swollen to the exact
size of my desire.

Hip to hip,
be it fish or fowl, be it
man or beast –

the body
does not discriminate.

3. *Hell*

strung & luted spread your legs

what goes in must come out

the banquet table en flambé

stomach plattered & pink

a knife a rattle a long, hard hiss

consumption a torso carved

the bird-man takes another

– ah, the slings & arrows –

canapé: you & your frog-legs

beneath the throne – the pit