

Custard and Blancmange

by Iain James Robb

Who here of us has not yet caught
Advanced to leaden fife,
The answer to our waiting What,
That answered, "Such is life?"
I saw a jelly man go past,
Who wobbled in his strife
And cried, "No stiffness that won't last
Is no good to my wife."

When wandering in the lucid lair
Of this world's ungolden woes,
Beside the weird and witless bear,
And dressed in purple bows-
What is this food the gods serve here,
What use of such to us?
"Oh, let us leave and have a beer."
"There isn't any bus."

I had a horse named Mandalay,
It reached up to my knee;
I dressed him up in cobble-grey,
Except he found it twee.
I've often found the plants at frown
Much friskier, dare I say? -
Than half the maids in my home town,
And so says Mandalay.

Once flights of coral bannisters
Attended slippered strayers,
Of wanton virgins, ministers
And ladies lipped with leérs.

Where have those people gone, my friends,
And, left, their summered shows,
Of hobnailed boots, and moccasins,
And tights without the toes?

I've often said the clothes men spy
Are good for breeding fleas.
Why not as easy pass us by,
Inside a giant cheese?
A lonelier thought returns to me,
Suborned to such as these,
"I see them dining on a tree,
And can I have some, please?"

Is it the sun or moon at swing
Abroad, a jaundiced pie?
A song of tenpence does not sing
Of ashtrays in the sky.
Oh, come you Mollies forth, and bring,
Without two words of lie,
A quart of moonshine mixed with gin
And cabbages, and rye.

We live with longing for the loom-
I say this on my knee-
That knitted up our spacious womb,
Or bins of blistered brie:
A basket full of bacon bloom,
Or so it seems to me.
Oh, bounce to me across the room,
My little Hildabee.

Or are you still, O Meggy mine,
The one who hoists my sails
Beyond these steeps of turpentine,

And mad mechanic rails?
Be it within a further clime
I'll ne'er forget you full,
Nor those imbecilic eyes of thine,
And barnet made of wool.

The gales thrice full that rollick me,
And romp and rail release,
I need to go and take a pee,
Where can I find a quiche?
The infant jellied in the freeze
Cries, "Where are you, my Mam."
Just so the goodest thing for knees
Is purpled chunks of ham.

Oh, where are all yon games and play
Of serpents in the lake?
Where are the ladies tame and gay,
Who told us they could bake?
Those eldritch jouneys, all are gaunt
As grandpate's boyhood's bray;
"Woof, neigh, and laugh: the poem is spent,"
And so adds Mandalay.

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