

It's a compromising situation...

by Jim Conway

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The would be Bride of Christ begins perspiring
before the crowd.

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring echoes through the antique church
just one more time,
a little loud.

With every added verse and every flickering vigil flame
the organist begins to falter.

My indifferent, unwed brother Mort begins to twitch and snicker.
"Jilted at the altar."

He is sick.

The doctors say he suffers
from a case of spiritual despair.

He jokes and throws his yoke like
arm around my neck.

"I don't care!

It can't cause acne or make me lose my hair."

He is sick. He knows it.

He is sick and he is dying.

And, with all my human faculty to feel such things,
I know that secretly he's crying.

"We lack an object of adoration..."

my father said to me in the final moments of his death bed
melodrama.

And, as we wait for the second coming,
I ruminate to my brother's quiet dirge like humming
of an advertiser's jingle.
"...And in our nation
we spend our lives, pitched and
sinking,
like lonely pennies in a wishing well..."
I start to twitch and feel my sleeping soul begin to tingle.

Hark!
The horns are sounded
and o'er head the marble clouds are parted.

Behold, the Angel of the Age is come!

Suddenly, my brother's brooding soul appears before me,
a stranger at the door
aching like a severed limb,
in guise these eyes have not seen before.

And lo!
He is writhen and enraged,
and in his fury questions why
God dares to stand up his bride?
"While I," he shouts, "I, His bastard son
have never been engaged!"

"Indeed!"
The august and gray haired guests
begin to hem and haw,
for they do not appreciate
such strange behavior.
"It's like a man upon a street corner,"
they sputter to themselves,
in a well conditioned responsorial guffaugh,

“who opens up his trench coat
and vents his naked spleen to passers by...”
They adjust the collars and the cuffs of their Sunday go to meetin'
clothes,
and return to sleep
to continue waiting for their savior.

“Each generation of our race,”
or so my father said,
“must forever seek The Buddha
only in the end to slay him...
We must forever steal the flickering flame of the gods
again.”

But in despair
and a brand new pair of fashionable Air Jordan's,
emblazoned like a pagan god,
my brother's angel wanders down the isle,
and through a land of shopping malls
like Hebrews in the desert
seeking love not from above
but Nike's victorious trademark smile.

“Can't you see?”
My father struck a frail fist
and shook his bald and uncrowned head.
“Remove the veil from your eyes!
You must become that restless thief within the night,
And yourself be bridegroom to the bride.”
And in the fevered moments before he died
he rubbed his wrinkled hands and licked his lips.
“Go on! Take her by surprise
and rape her in the fallen candle light
and, in so doing
replant the seed...”

refill the grail..."

But still we wait for a twist of fate and the coming of the groom
as the organist plays on and on in the ever closing gloom.

Now the wedding guests begin to snore and sputter
to my brother's soothing dirge like humming
while the minister, concerned about his payment,
insists repeatedly that the bridegroom will be coming.

And, all the while I wear a knowing smile...
even though my soul is numbing.

