

How to Kill a Dragon Dead

by strannikov

The worm was stabbed where two rivers branch:
the thing that would slay was slain.
Its headless body a poison green,
its head now tossed to the tides.
Rot oozes fast from its corpse,
rotteness sinks and spreads into dirt—
quick the time to build a fire.

The evil thing crawled from its dark hole:
its trail a poisonous ooze.
Out of the earth it squirmed into view
poisoning the sleeping town.
It oozed the poison it brought
from where slimes breed ill with other slimes
until slimes learn how to crawl.

This one worm poisoned thousands and more,
gentry and servant alike,
matrons and young girls, boys never shaved,
grandmothers, sires rudely dead—
with plague of poison it squirmed
unseen danger beneath moonless nights,
festering puddles of slime.

The poisons festered for two long months:
when the third new moon arrived,
thrown from our terrors into black night,
we waited within the dark:
when we thought we saw something aglow
beneath that dark moonless night,
we aimed our lamps at the giant worm:

a swaying green thing thirty feet long,
green with green-oozing poison,
blinded by our torches lifted high,
its eyes accustomed to dark—
studded with venom-dripping red spikes,
the oozing writhing monster
rose upon its haunches, spraying filth.

Pitchforks by the dozen pierced its flesh,
and then a sharp axe was swung,
body tossed into a pit ablaze,
head thrown to receding tide.
The fetid rot has sunk into earth:
we have killed the evil thing—
our rotten soil will need time to cure.

