

# Church of Storms

by [Bobby Parrott](#) (January 2024)



Volcano at Night– Jules Tavernier, 1885-89

## Church of Storms

Behold the turbulence,  
harsh and relentless.  
Wind unstrings history  
to release your body  
layer by layer, approaching  
the placid eye of its truth.

Clothed in the down  
of eaglets, we refuse  
to embrace the falling  
outside. Within  
the hurricane's eye, we fly

hard in the face

of forever. The altar's  
bottomless clock  
strikes Never. The faithful  
build towers. Our words

runneth over. The church  
has no doors. Surely

as a solitary bell unclasps  
its iron voice, the Nothing  
speaks. You die here.

The Lord of Shards, our Infinite  
Mother, disrupts your tomb,  
a murder of well-armed angels

erupting in magma disgorged  
through the spinal column  
of Vesuvius. The raw honesty

of killing! Seven times  
our High Priest  
sings your time-bound name,  
while seven portraits  
burn, an effigy to the roar  
on the other side

of silence. And finally, our priests  
wax cumulous, float starward,  
gravity's oppression meaningless.

### **Softer as Time**

The twenty-dollar gold piece  
mints a raised eagle  
into my childish palm

as the concussion  
of the locomotive's piston  
arm loosens bolt after rusty bolt.  
The smoke box face  
comes apart. Its single eye  
drifts into a dementia  
where ones become twos,  
rose begets blues

and the monstrous machine  
lets go its voice—  
steam-calliope screams  
that gobble a wobbling world  
to ribbons. Painted blind,  
the carousel horse under me  
orbits the ride's circular platform.  
New balloons

brush the engine's face softer  
as time unwinds  
in puffs of white steam.  
I'm frightened. I want  
my father to pluck the Lionel  
engine off its tracks, cradle  
it in his arms, tease me again

into loving it. Golden-Book Tootle,  
childish locomotive, leaves  
the tracks to play  
in the daisies. My mother  
twirls the pages further  
to where the conductor strolls  
down the aisle, spin-flips  
me the thick gold piece. It flashes

through the train's air; I reach up,  
catch it mid-spin. Now my little hand  
warms the coin my father

gave me most of a century ago—  
or no, wait, was it today?

## **On the White Water of Astonished, You Drop Your Paddle and Surrender**

The admission of light as it widens an iris, feathery sphincter liquidly altering aperture so an organic lens can bend beams into an image, a sort of map of what's out there. And the photovoltaic screen of the retina's resolution of rods and cones encoding a language of impulses through optic nerve's pathway back to galactic bundles of correlatives we call brain, that swarming, electronic limiting valve.

Like the way this poem flexes its neuro-linguistic constructs, aligns forests of ovoid pathways, performs alien symmetries into being. A smile, that cartoonesque doorway to sexual oblivion. When you peer directly into someone's pupils, imagine a conduit of shared birdsong, but then don't look away. Swim the watercourse clear back to the impression of self and peep into the collective brainstem screen we've conveniently a

Go with it until you hear the sound of sheets being torn, the sound just before a lightning strike, Tinkerbelle's searing sister to thermonuclear detonation immediately preceding the end of the world. It's here. Don't miss it, because it's already happened, continues to happen, will never happen. How can you tell someone they're playing a role in the uncanny vestibule of a non-lucid collective reflection when they insist on confusing inside with out? How can you tell them to wake up, that they're no longer the protagonist in their own life, that language represses even the most idyllic childhood before love can possibly intercede?

Every mask I try on at the air show speaks in the voices of Rilke's terrible angels, the Sublime proximity of hyperspace,

negation of hubris. Is this where beauty meets terror, a sort of sexual Armageddon the Pentagon pumps up to pretend? Warfare as fireworks? Flat on my belly, I pull myself up the gravel path with only my eyelid muscles. I've never been helpless, just so often asleep.

## **We the Fused Warhead of Capital Gain**

While our brothers and sisters the trees apply to meet on the Zoom platform, their root systems no longer offer enough bandwidth to publicize the first-hand murder of millions, as forests are excised. So we inhale their platitudes, buzz-saw adjectives

into a softer medicine legally dissolving housing developments we can no longer

quarantine. Wooden rattle of violin bodies, the broken bassoon never getting its head above the noise. Instead, we search hungrily for our infancies, gold watch of corporate reward dangling from one brave little finger like a fish hook. Thou preparest a table

before me in employment of legions of soldiers who walk mile-thick lines between a paycheck and their next death. Swallowed whole and keenly ever after we the fused warhead of capital gain

grip the religion steering-wheel, white-knuckled, ever thankful. Forced war machines grow

mega-dollar bank accounts, impale rare species, fly thru memory like ghosts: venom-tipped

missiles that mark all our childhoods past-due.

## [Table of Contents](#)

**Bobby Parrott's** poems appear or are forthcoming in *RHINO*, *Tilted House*, *Whale Road Review*, *The Hopper*, *Rabid Oak*, *Phantom Kangaroo*, *Neologism*, and elsewhere. In his own words, "The intentions of trees are a form of loneliness we climb like a ladder." Immersed in a forest-spun jacket of toy dirigibles, this writer dreams himself out of formlessness in the chartreuse meditation capsule known as Fort Collins, Colorado.

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