

| xi. *The Assembly of the Snakes.*

Seamus silently endured his fate
amid the tangled wires of office life -
the sharpened smiles, the slick routine,
the well-groomed strife.
One night, when he was working late,
he heard an unexpected call:

*Leave the clamour of this jaded scene,
the traffic jams and the suburban sprawl,
and dedicate your energies instead
to making pottery and candles and brown bread.*

He left his briefcase and his tailored coat
behind and found a small remote
and friendly place and settled down
to tranquil productivity
until, one evening as the sun went down,
he saw with fearful clarity
the imposing shadow of a dinosaur.

Excitedly he waited
maybe seven hours or more -
every detail annotated,
every movement, every sound,
every scratching of the ground -
till, with the brightening of the day,
he saw the shadow turn away
and sink into the furtive slime.

When the Assembly of the Snakes
asked to hear what Seamus had to say,
he raised his head with the solemn sway
of a warrior dance in ancient time:

*I saw the beast. My heart still quakes
at her immeasurable size.
Her lips were thin, her nostrils wide,
her spine bizarrely fortified.*

*With fangs prepared to fight,
I confronted this alarming sight,
but she gently closed her eyes
and drew a breath as if to speak;
tears rolled down her cheek
and, whispering my name,*

she returned to whence she came.

The scowling lofty headed faction
had the first, and negative, reaction:

*We resolve to hear no more
of this abominable dinosaur.*

A lecturer in ancient Greek
then raised his head and asked to speak:

*Dinosaurs are typically found
in the sea and underground
and in some cases have been known to fly,
but not one of them can cry.*

The venomous faction arose shaking many a fist;
projectiles flew at the chair and missed
and the air was wildly stung
by many a dripping fang and forked tongue
until they heard a lonely shout:

I'm the bea(th)t you are (th)peaking about!

Everybody turned around –
not a whisper, not a sound.
Above them stood the dinosaur
and, limping down to take the floor,
she innocently tried to win
them with a well-worn toothless grin.

*I (th)uppothe
that everybody know(th)
about my lamentable gory
and (th)imply frightful (th)tory.
I (th)ee no point in endle(th)ly repeating
what can be heard at every cro(th)road(th) meeting.
(Th)ufi(th)e to (th)ay
(d)at the una(th)uming de(th)ent day
of dino(th)aur(th) will (th)oon be gone.*

*I a(th)k for little,
that my friend(th) might (th)ing a (th)ong
and (d)at my enemie(th) refrain
from di(th)paraging my name
and u(th)ing (th)pittle.*

She saw the factions jointly heave
the most sceptical of sighs.
They took their leave
with grim formality
and weary eyes
and faces resolutely squared,
till they gathered in the great outdoors
defiantly prepared,
with well-rehearsed dislikes
and rusty guns and ancient pikes,
for the showdown with the dinosaurs.