
Mad Messiah.

A Comic Saga in Four Cycles.

By Edmond Grace.

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DEDICATION

To Vladimir and Estrogon.

When I was nineteen I went to see Samuel Becket's play 'Waiting for Godot.' Usually, when I went to the theatre, it was with friends, but this time I wanted to be alone. I wasn't sure how my friends would react - not to the play but to my interest in it. So I sat there, watching the antics of two strange characters called Vladimir and Estragon (Didi and Gogo to each other). At some point I could hear, in my own mind, these words:

- Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.

If you want to know what they mean, imagine you are Jesus Christ nailed to a cross and about to die. Then roar out:

- Eloi, eloi lama sabachthani!
- My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.

The play is about Didi and Gogo passing the time as they wait for Monsieur Godot, but the play ends before Monsieur Godot arrives. I like Didi and Gogo. I like the way they live in hope instead of sitting back and looking on and knowing everything and doing nothing. The poems which follow were written with Didi and Gogo in mind and my hope is that one day you or I might meet them face to face and recite one of my poems. I think Didi and Gogo would like what I have written.

'PROLOGUE - the icon.

Beneath the haloed bearded mask
reflecting fragments lie. They ask
one question with four parts
of me which make me partly sad
and here our playful saga starts:

*Dublin south-sider,
aging Jesuit,
bruised male,
Irish Catholic.*

Down all the days
I call his name and sing his praise
and wonder what makes Mad Messiah mad.

*The First Cycle –
Reptiles and the Rising Sun.*

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Fragment – Dublin Southsider.

*We civilized well-spoken folk of Dublin town
with solemn eye and roguish frown
have long admired the smooth displays
and scornful tone and biting ways
of hatred's hero, smiling, born to win.*

*But in this lonely ancient place,
on the grey half-buried skin
of the hero's frozen face
in bitter etchings of remorse,
hatred's charm has run its course.*

i. | *Killer Cain.*

When Killer Cain had done his worst,
he was vigorously cursed
and, with melancholy air,
began to wander here and there
and found that every door was closed
and every heart aggrieved and ill-disposed.

Just when all hope had gone
and Cain was heaving tearful sighs
a curling gliding creature came along
with slender tail and sympathetic eyes:

*We knew your parents well.
We took their part when they so swiftly fell
from grace and were so tragically maligned.
Here at the world's remotest end
our outcast breed will always be inclined
to greet a child of Adam as a friend.*

*We know all about misanthropy and strife
and how one brother
might so easily kill another
with a knife*

*and we greet
your story with that eagerness
with which unswerving sharks express
their love for meat.*

*It's only fair to mention
an enduring source of tension
on these distant shores -
the awkward oversized feet of dinosaurs.*

*They won't endure for ever,
being far too big and not too clever,
and, with every passing night,
they sing the same sad song
of how they are so right
and how they soon might all be gone.*

*And finally, we've heard reports
about your wish for solitude.*

*We fully comprehend
how the burden of celebrity
can leave you out of sorts
and, so, we recommend
a place where no one will intrude.*

*There you can wait until the end of time –
alone and free
with your story and your crime.*

ii. | *The coming of the Dinosaurs.*

A dinosaur came - of gargantuan girth.
She was ready to grovel and beg.
She asked for a soft overgrown plot of earth:

For I fear I may (th)oon lay an egg!

Only then did the dinosaur recognise
the smirking lips and scheming eyes
of a highly skilled and charming snake:

*Might I recommend
a lonely isle on a distant lake
with a faithful friend?*

From time immemorial snakes had agreed,
as our lady friend figured too well,
that dinosaur eggs were a tasty feed –
both the slithery bits and the shell -
and sadly aware of her limited choice
she spoke with a scornful edge in her voice:

No doubt you have a pri(th)e in mind.

The snake with a diffident smile
began to stealthily unwind:

*The very suggestion
of payment is out of the question!
Utterly vile!*

Then up from the valleys, down from the trees,
out of hedges rivers and seas
came an obscenely slithering hoard,
but the dinosaur raised her big flat feet
and swivelled her head and loudly roared
and at this unfamiliar sound
the snakes politely yielded ground,
contemplating swift retreat.

There are differing views as to how it all ended.
The snakes insist that friendship was intended
with an occasional bite - nothing worse -
but the dinosaurs have always said:

*(D)ey're a fil(t)y and mean diabolical cur(th)e
and (th)oon we'll all be dead!*

iii. | *The little Dinosaur and his big sister.*

Two little dinosaurs one day
set out on a journey side by side.
One was timid and dreamy-eyed
and he raised his head in a hopeful way:

Will you (th)ing me a (th)ong?

She looked down – quite at a loss
for words and terribly cross:

*What are you (t')inkin' of? Don't be a fool.
We never (th)ing (th)ong(th) on the way to (th)chool!*

With a keenly felt and tragic pout
his nethermost lip came curling out,
but sister swiftly took firm charge
her pointed finger looming large:

*If you (th)tart making an unholy show,
the bigger boy(th) will give you hell
and I will have you know
(d)ey'll be blackguardin' me a(th) well!*

The little fellow turned his head;
he sadly gazed and quietly said:

- Would (d)ey be (th)ayin' bad (t')ing(th) to you?

- You'd better believe it boy. (D)ey would too!

With head held high and lip uncurled
he was ready for a brave new world
and long before the day was out
he was able to push and shove and shout.

Now his sister had warned from the very start
that snakes were mean and smiley and smart,
but he wasn't prepared for the venomous glee
of a villainous snake,
who jeered at the Dinosaur family
one day near the end of break.

Little brother called for an honest fight,
but the snake lashed out with fearsome guile
and then, with a curious smile,
drew back to inspect

every delicate effect
of his well-placed bite.

The little fellow fell to the ground
and the cowardly snake, with sickening skill,
got ready for the kill.
Then, as from a distant heavenly shore,
he heard big sister's thundering roar:

*Beat hi(th) dirty little hide
and leave no(tt)in' in(th)ide!*

The devious and gloating snake
had lowered his guard - a stupid mistake -
and little brother gave him a clatter on the head
and his eyes went black and his nostrils bled
and the whole school started to rejoice
as he went home howling at the top of his voice.

* * *

Years and decades lumbered by
but big sister never forgot
the day when she saw him swiftly fly
like an arrow to hit the spot.

It was better by far than the glorious day
when, with frowning resolute flair,
he took the slitter in mid-air
and sent it curving sweetly under the bar.

Each year, when his family came to stay
they drove in a smart but reliable car
and the children saluted passers by
with a wave of the hand and a hesitant 'hi.'

They listened with bemused respect
as their aunt would brazenly connect
her rough-hewn world to theirs:

*In (th)pite of his wife with her elegant air(th)
and his hou(th)e with the glorious(th) view
of he (th)ea on Merrion Avenue,
I'll alway[th] remember that day when he (th)parred
with a (th)ilppery devil in the old (th)chool yard.
He'(th) come a long way but, tru(t') to tell,
he'(th) (th)ill fightin' (th)nakes and he'(th) fightin' well.*

On hearing this enchanted lore
from an ancient far off place
they were eager to find out more
on the journey home,
but all their curiosity
broke like crashing foam
along the silent dignity
of dad's determined face.

They retreated to the soft refrain
of tyres swishing in the rain,
and window wipers waving their hands in the night -
right, left, right, left, right.

iv. | *The quivering Rattle Snake.*

When changing tides allow
the yawning mile of Dublin Bay
lays bare the troubled brow
of the quivering Rattle Snake.

There are those in Dublin town
who greet her story with a frown
but many are proud of the way,
in which she rudely brought awake
the self-contented scene:

*When the day is cold
at the water's edge
and the air is clean
beneath the blue still sky,
I come in restive mood
to this unlikely hermitage
and watch my thoughts unfold
and, in that sweet pride of solitude,
I hear a distant fearful cry
floating on the winter sea.*

*The simple beauty of that sound –
cuts through the tidy ground
of Dublin's narcissistic mile
with the untouched ancient guile
of wounded memory.*

Rattle Snake disappeared that day.
The news went about in a furtive way
calling for funeral rites to begin
and many anonymous feet joined in
from Cavendish Row to Merrion Square,
talking of why she had gone and where.

In the afternoon breeze
the doorknobs, the trees
and a doubtful sky
saluted the mourners passing by
and from the shadows of the crowd
a voice came, clear and loud:

*Among the whispered calls
of cobblestones and warehouse walls
I saw her in the cold street light
and her quivering tail was a pitiful sight
and, when I gently called her name,
no answer came.*

*My hands found nothing but her grin
and her dried out ink marked skin
and I was alone in the threadbare street
where bottles and bags and reptiles meet.*

v. | *Monsignor Boa Constrictor.*

In times gone by
every danger to the nation's soul
was greeted by the watchful eye
of the Reverend Monsignor Boa Constrictor.
He would open his amazing jaw
and swallow it whole.

His undisputed sway
among the loyal and the old
is keenly felt, to this very day,
and for this reason we hereby present
his final will and testament:

*Thinking of the life I had,
I contemplate the latter years,
when every kind of mad
and brazen masquerade
came jiving through the land
with smirks and sneers.*

*On behalf of all things good,
I took a disapproving stand
but the insolent parade
swept along like a river in flood.*

*Now my life is ebbing by the hour.
Deep within me lies a forge
for every dark and demon trick
and a putrid slick
lurks beneath my gorge
with a taunting and devious power.*

*Before you frolic in the realm of death,
draw close and take a sample of my breath.*

Mother Anaconda's girls and boys
took care to make as little noise
as possible. If she came through that door,
those who misbehaved
(and might end up wicked and depraved)
would be dealt with from her store
of finely calculated punishments
and made to howl and weep and wince.

With acrid mouth and steely eye,
she noted every strand of uncombed hair
and every maladjusted tie
among the wayward children in her care.

She would pounce
with blinding speed and skill
on all who dared to mispronounce
the most trifling syllable.

Then her children came of age
and the creaking door of the cage
of terror opened wide
and, though she resolutely tried
to counsel and explain
that their audacity would end in pain,
they heedlessly began to shout
and heave and struggle out.

In bleak and pensive mood
she listened, as her thankless brood
started calling out her name
with accumulated howls
and tight-lipped blame
and sad offended scowls
and, preparing for a fight
with all her whinging enemies,
she moved, with hardened ease,
to put them right:

*Come forward, fling your stones,
bring your cameras and your microphones,
your gasps and groans of disbelief,
they'll bring me no more grief
than I've already suffered at your scrawny hands.*

*I am the one who spent her days,
enduring all your squawks and brays
and the wearisome demands
of runny noses, spelling and addition
and you dare to call for my contrition!*

The simple candour of that moment caught
the bond between the teacher and the taught.
Then the stones flew one by one
until their long awaited work was done
and all began to quietly disperse,
proud to rid the country of that curse.

vii. | *The great Black Mamba.*

The great Black Mamba's candid eye
could see the well-fed rounded lie
longing fervently to bask
in the attention of the crowd.

Warming to his task,
Black Mamba quietly began to hone
each question like a sculpted fang
and, raising the microphone
with smiling agility,
he swiftly sprang.

The mask of plausibility
was stripped away and once again
truth had triumphed. Many were proud
to see the dawn of such a day.

A deputation of admirers made its way
up to Black Mamba's high secluded cave -
a place of stone and simple furniture.

With noble chin and eyes demure
Black Mamba kept the messengers in sight
and when they arrived and placed their plan
before his watchful frown -
that he might be the nation's judge of right -
his seldom seen and unaffected charm
took the timid envoys by surprise:

*You over-dramatize
the virtues of this fragile man.
What I have seen and heard has worn me down.*

Smiling at their innocent alarm,
he invited them to be at home
at the foot of his leather and chrome
one legged stool:

*Were I to accept your brave request
and bathe in the shallow pool
of public glory in this wretched land,
who could confidently state
that loyalty would stand the test
of power? The stony hand
of treachery would lie in wait.*

They raised Black Mamba high
on his black leather-cushioned seat
and curled and wound their way
in an elaborate feat
down to the people with a resolute cry:

Black Mamba's bitter judgement must be said!

The people gathered on that day
to see Black Mamba candidly assess,
with solemn inclination of his head,
their integrity and worthiness.

His smile revealed an unexpected sight -
a mouth the colour of the night.

viii. | *Tony Cobra.*

The Cobras as a family were high above reproach.
They had no time for snakes who sought to pester or encroach
and they only spat at others who were able to spit back
(unless they had clear evidence of venomous attack),
but they thought that the most reputable policy by far
was to hold themselves aloof behind the window of the car.

The father of the Cobras was a formidable kind;
his wife, with an elegant turn of mind,
was noted for intelligence and charm.
Tony, they had hoped, would be their pride and joy
but for some hidden reason, some unexplained harm,
he became a difficult and tiresome boy.

One day when the Cobras were eating together,
exchanging remarks on the wine and the weather,
the thoughtful and playful and nonchalant tone
was disturbed by the tiresome sound of the phone.
When they answered an old and reliable friend -
unmistakeably clear at the line's furthest end -
was telling them heatedly just what to do:

Turn on the tv! Right now! Channel two!

Tony was appearing
with a large enamelled earring
and a skewer through his nose
on one of the more disreputable shows:

*I really have no time
for those who moan and whine
at every unsuspecting chat show host
about their childhood misery.
I've yet to meet the family
which manages to coast
along in constant celebration.*

*The candid telling of a tale
of youthful desperation
brings relief, but why not write it down?
A book of tragedy will never fail
to help your bank account.*

*Mine is on sale for a modest amount.
It details a regretful lack of caring
sensibility and gives an honest airing
to the phobias and fears
which have troubled me since childhood years.*

Tony's parents were alarmed.
They asked their eldest son,
who practised law with great success,
to proffer his opinion:

*I find clear evidence
of reputations badly harmed
by filial abuse, though common sense
would say that greater haste brings less
reward. The issues will unfold
more clearly when the film rights are sold.*

ix. | *Peter Python.*

Among his well-trained audience
Peter Python's masculine physique
receives due deference.
Performing with Olympian skill,
he likes to place each helper off her guard
with knowing grin and sly critique.

Yet as he glides into his gown,
he notes with thoughtful frown,
that levity has never marred
their necessary focus on the task
of knowing when to mop his brow,
what to proffer, where and how -
enabling him to bask
(certain of being fully understood)
in their devotion for the greater good.

The curtain rises day by day
on the stage where he alone holds sway
and effortlessly plays the part
of noble sovereign, guardian of life
over open cavity and trembling heart,
not with a sceptre but a surgeon's knife.

x. | *Eddie Adder*

There are not many,
who begin without a penny
and end by making money grow on trees.
Eddie Adder is one of these.

In his early teens
as an office boy
with Fagan Kelly and Molloy,
he swiftly learnt the ways and means
of the charming smile and the watchful pen.

Starting with an advantageous loan
secured with skill and acumen,
he went out on his own
and, in due course, became a billionaire.

He was invited to endow a chair,
by an admiring university
and, with his famed ability
to reassure the anxious and perturbed,
he knew what might be best allowed to lie
discreetly undisturbed
as a forest of cranes rose to the sky.

His critics, through the years,
had spoken with foreboding eyes
of how his meteoric rise
would end in tears,
but confidantes and devotees
tranquilly betrayed
not one glimmer of unease
as Eddie's smoothly programmed cavalcade
swept aside all blame.

Then one day a lone accuser came
calling for his rights in open court:

*I carry a compendium of files
with cheques for curious amounts,
a trail of foreign bank accounts
and an auditor's report
on the never-ending wiles of the accused.*

Eddie's counsel rose to his full height:

*My client is saddened and bemused
and intends to vigorously fight
every last outrageous claim.
So it was with deep regret
this morning, in early hours,
that he instructed me
to ask that the hearing be reset
for a later more convenient date.
He has been suffering of late
from a pitilessly throbbing knee
which has undermined his powers
of narrative and subtle argument.*

From the crowded gallery
Eddie's victims, in the throes
of righteous discontent,
howled in wounded majesty:

*We who have suffered seethed and wept
are entitled to know where his keys are kept
and everything his doctor knows.*

An order was made to leave no stone unturned,
until Eddie's whereabouts
was known, and soon, amid triumphant shouts,
the hearing was adjourned
to a private clinic – on the seventh floor
with an startling drop to the ground.

His accusers gathered round
and Eddie saw it was too late.
He raised his head
and drew from his deep store
of charm and plausibility:

*Do not underestimate
how fervently I sympathise
with the need to earn one's daily bread,
but every fool must realise
that the curse of gullibility,
along with the accompanying strife,
is one of those sad realities of life.*

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.

xii. | *The Mother of Sin.*

In the corner of the land
where snakes pass by with a curious grin
we are given to understand
there lives an old snake called the Mother of Sin.

No one remembers how she came
to be called by such an name
but nowadays, they all agree,
she lives unostentatiously.

*I am waiting in mid-winter's dawn
searching for a way
to unlock the secrets of the day
when God alone gave birth,
when an ocean of uncertainty was filled
by the distant passion of the sun
and love first spilled
its fire upon the earth.*

*I watched as Adam in his dream
reached with hope for the skies
and the sun's first beam
drew out the rib of flesh and opened his eyes
to a companion in creation.*

*I could feel his gaze
as the loving conversation
rambled along Eden's ways,
until we both came peacefully to rest
and, among our whisperings, agreed
that touch and taste had made us blessed
beyond all need.*

*But in those moments hidden from the sun
our lips betrayed that shadow of pretence
in which the lurking harbinger of grief
makes lovers discontented with belief.*

*Our triumph was to be undone
when friendly footsteps in the grass
playfully laid bare our shame
and arguments of wounded innocence
and angry protestation were to pass
into a fretful measurement of blame.*

*Bowed beneath the burden of his fear
and undecided love, I came to toil
among the secrets of the soil
where kindly prophecies appear.*

*And the pride of one who longs
for beauty gentleness and songs
by the shore of ancient seas
among half hidden memories
will walk beside us yet.
There is a joy that lives beyond regret.*

xiii. | *The Clown.*

In the temple of the town
a sad conceited clown
is calling every voice to shout –

The snakes are silently slithering out!

and, rising with a furtive glance,
he will wave his arms and start to dance.

The conical hat
in the circus top
poised precariously
over the drop
wavering side to side on the rope
as fingers reach to grasp and grope,
when a fatherly hand
with cold command
grips the groin with iron will:

*Further onward
further still.
The last are first.
The first is least.
Summon your sons
to share the feast.*

A youthful head against his heart
pleading eyes and lips apart.
The line of his hand
the wine in his breath
betray the shimmering
shade of death.

Limping lewdly
onto his knees
he lowers his head
between the trees
and out of the curtains
comes a kiss.

The courtiers start to laugh and hiss
with folded arms and pointed leer:

He's only a child. He shouldn't be here.

And an aging monarch with multiple chin
waves his hand and sips his gin.

The mob is milling
around the gate
sowing the seed
of strife and hate
with the governor royally
raising his arm:

He's only a child! He means no harm.

But the voice of the mob is dark and raw
with craning neck and menacing claw
and the blink of a cold reptilian eye:

Give us Barabbas and crucify!

A man who knows the popular mind
stepping silently behind
with thoughtful frown upon his face,
his fingers flow with flair and grace -
and down the whip with a whining crack
and the governor calmly turns his back.

A sadly stooping
scarlet clown
with tangled hair
and thorny crown,
silent in disgrace.

A guard comes over and slaps his face.

Aching bones
and weary feet
clumsily climb
along the street
slipping and slumbering
into the mud
leaving an image
of sweat and blood.

Men look on with fearful mind,
children falling in behind,
dogs are weaving through the throng
sniffing the ground and running along
and women are wailing while he goes
in one of Jerusalem's holiday shows.

Into the block
they knock the pin
with horrible hammer
and clamour and din.
Up with the arms,
out with the chest,
into the beam
the buttocks are pressed.

The writhing dance of agony
now plays before the waiting crowd,
who watch with curiosity.
They relish every move until
the performer's head hangs bowed
and still.

A well-used spear casually
breaks the flesh apart.

Blood and water from the heart
falls to earth,
in a silent second birth,
to reveal a wounded snake for all to see.

xiv. | *The Legend of the Wounded Snake.*

Beside a lone and windswept lake
to the sound of lapping water
warriors, bewitched and ill at ease,
are searching for the wounded snake.

The women laugh and tease,
whispering that blood and slaughter
are in truth his hiding place.

Whoever meets him face to face
(or so the ancient story goes)
will vanquish their foes
and thereby hangs a tale of grief,
because the tribes of ancient days
fought with a warlike proud belief
in the legend's holy power
until that shameful hour.

They saw the armoured horseman raise,
to roars of victory,
the captured crown - '*Our task is done*' -
and holding high the royal wounded one
they carried him across the sea.

A pitiless dawn had come
and the dip of an oar like a broken drum
moved toward the shadow in the mist
where, with slow and stately list
and tattered remnants of pride,
defeated warriors set sail.
Those remaining on the shore
saw the gap grow wide
and felt the tearing of a veil
woven from the sacred store
of ancient memories.

A voice from the shadows and the mud
called out in sorrow:

*We who struggle scrape and borrow
dedicate our tears and blood,
calling on the wounded king to save
us from a cruel grave.*

Others came and saw the sign unfold
of a severed bloody hand
with warlike deeds of old
and royal command:

*Though we were few,
with foes on every side, we knew
the holy champion would bless
our covenant and banish wickedness.*

In the Valley of the Kings
where ancient wounds come face to face,
the call of rival gatherings
found a likely halting place
and the rising sun revealed
two swordsmen, Cain and his twin brother,
each with a mirror for a shield
holding the image of the other.

With the flash and clang
of the sword many a restive glance
hovered like a thirsty fang
waiting to sink.

The swordsmen clashed repeatedly
in unrelenting dance
till blades in fearful symmetry
opened up two glamorous ink
rivulets of red.

The brothers bled
their souls into the ground.
No corpse was found
but through that night the tribes remained awake
remembering the wounded snake
and the sombre call:

*Cain, the Protected One, is dead.
On whom does sevenfold vengeance fall?*

Mid-winter's early morning light
moves along the hill
to the opening in the wall of white
and shines, with ancient skill,
along the silent passage way.

I reach and find
and gaze and grieve
at the pitiful display
of an old man drooling on his sleeve.

Another morning comes to mind,
when two brothers made a vow to bring
a friendly sign –
a token of sweet labouring.

You brought the finest wheat
and grapes plucked freshly from the vine
and Abel came to greet
you with his new born lamb.

Your eyes were merciless and calm,
as you made him plunge the knife
and in the widening pool of blood,
with envy seething in your soul,
you watched the ebbing of a life –
the beauty of your brotherhood.

You put your arm around him then,
inviting him to take a stroll
like two brothers, friends, two men
and from his unsuspecting love,
the sacrificial knife you hid
till, like a hand into a glove,
the blade into his belly slid

and, as you turned your face to flee,
his bleak bewildered pain
sank, with bloody stain,
into your memory.

Your hands are old and withered now
as you cringe and bow
and touch the waiting stones
of this dark recess.

I bring the bread of faithfulness,
the happy cup of memories,
to reach your unloved groans.
My fingers touch your wrinkled face with ease.

I am God's oldest and most foolish Son,
born to gather Abel's blood.
Now come and kiss the wood
where love's victory was won
for I have brought a fish to eat,
caught in the deepest pool of praise –
salmon of wisdom at your feet.

I bring Abel by the hand
from those early carefree days
and, side by side, we stand.
Can you hear the refrain
of our unlikely song?

*Come from the darkness, brother Cain,
and see the rising sun grow strong.*