

Jim Cohn

Excerpts from "Treasures for Heaven"

by
Jim Cohn

I

Forgive me, Angels,
You had only wings, I poems
That entered me as a man
Enters the house
Of unwavering light
Thick as labyrinths
Coming apart at the bottom
Where all that could be I left for you.

II

Through the enduring memory
Of the present
I walk past the blue hells of
Delusion's
Graffiti handcuffs
That no matter how sublime
Bring greatness to the empire
For naught.

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III

Soon I come to the confluence
Of spring & forever, but
I've no one to share a happy moment
Save a vague voice calling
But I'm thinking of no one special
Round the entire
Ghoulisn star field
As it begins again to shift.

IV

I give you emotional radio
Live from the galaxies
Of Mercy that linger
So near
Our understanding each other
Like a woman
Who always rises late
& love that comes without bounds.

V

In your voice is an immensity
Greater than near-death
Along a stretch of cactus-dotted
Power plants where
We met on the corner
Of love-at-first-sight
With its violin wrapped tight

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In the cool silk of your arms.

X

There were boarded up windows,
& factories of corpses &
Ninety miles out of town
I can still hear the endless weeping
Of mourners at the gate where
No one has to ask why
The Angels stopped
Lighting themselves on fire.

XI

So much has changed
In so little time
& yet I still crave the sight of you
Dancing in the park
With the sun
Coming out again
From the stormy weather
Of the joy we shared.

XXIX

Your notebook was washed ashore,
But it was hardly
The last change
In the first realm of paradise
Where Love

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Dreams of the way Beauty
in all her languages says
The work of the world is peace.

XXXI

I grieve the chaos
Of the deceased in their smeared make-up
Of slit throats
Where in mid-sentence
I repent the monsters
Of unlicensed nihilism
Because I am from the massacre
& I am the massacre.

XXXIII

I've always been enchanted
By the persimmon tree
That requires
So many years to bear fruit
Even as you wipe away
The hysterical pleasures
Of self-conscious bitterness
From the eternal circle of your heart.

XXXIV

Humanitarian disaster
everywhere I turn
Reminds me of someone else

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I'll never know.
There's a tin cup on my table--
You left it here, maybe you left it for me.
I take it out to catch the tears that harmlessly fall
Thinking they've damaged the earth.

XXXVIII

You often talked with me
About the spaces
Between breaths as far richer than wealth &
So I looked there for you--
Hoping to see, touch & hear
All that is born
Like a poem
That once read is never found again.

XXXIX

At Crystal Pass
Where I wait for you
Flowers call out
To their gypsy lovers
That their tedious acceptance of praise
For one's state of mind
Is as ridiculous as
Having two feet.

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LVI

Angels, my Poem

Never sleeps--

It watches over the planet

The way a graveyard

Watches over music,

The way loss watches over war,

The way failure

Watches over the living.

LXXI

As the families arrive,

The gold-toothed undertaker

Turns off his

Hearing aids

That bleed

In the light of the blue-grey snow

As he covers her body

In full sight of the peacekeepers.

LXXII

Around the planet

Tales float of a soldier

Who almost clubbed

A young student

During a political

Firestorm

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If not for the sound
Of one chanting Om.

LXXIII

Why do we hide
Our weaknesses
Like hangmen writing elegant postcards
With ink made of urine
In the emergency rooms of memory
As doctors weigh the fingers of
Deadmen sitting in chairs
With shiny yellow badges?

LXXXV

Of one million families
Ruined by the heavy toll
Only a hundred endured.
If I was President
I'd paint the White House black--
Then I would write on its wall--
The fruits of their crackdowns
Will also prove illusory.

XCVIII

No regrets, though I wish
I'd been able to write the laughter of women.
The wild river of laughter--
My whole life,

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Immersed in this laughter.
The laughter of women--
Who can hope to reply
To such exquisite songs?

XCIX

Those who commit
The most ungodly acts
Still do so with the assurance of the feeling
That nothing will be done.
This is why we have chosen to appear
Through the madrone blossoms
Willing to give our lives
So that others might live.

C

Face to face,
The mind in its holy vacuum,
I have passed many seasons
My endless phrases
Addressed to no one--
Like the light dust
Falling upon your shoulders
As you ride past Jupiter hot springs.

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