

Luncheon at Sharon's: A Threnody for Three Voices

'We look ... for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five.'

Joan Didion on the Manson Family murders at Sharon Tate's Cielo Drive residence.

I

Prologue

CALIBAN (Ascending)

I know what I have done, am doing, shall do.
I stand central to my self; my centre holds.
The world is Plato's and I his messenger.
I bring the new idealism, the chthonic gods
Scorned by Olympians, but immortal still.
The cave wherein I dwell is not the bard's
(Father William was mistaken there),
But Plato's magic lantern horror show
Where I, alone, have turned myself about
To face the great projector in the air,
And gazed in pain upon the perfect forms
Essential. What I saw, you shall see.
This is my calling and my pleasure now,
For like Prometheus I would bring to Man
A piece of that hand-scorching fire that lights the sky.
To put it simply, my vocation is
To make the quintessential manifest.
Three principles shall guide me in this enterprise.
Primo, Probability: (succinctly)
If I throw a knife into a crowd,
I'll pierce someone. Secundo, Randomness:
The one I hit will be an average man.
The last is Universal Entropy
Slouching its way toward Hollywood tonight,
For willy-nilly I have sent them out
With butcher knives to do Platonic work.
So I have sailed the seas and done—what I have done.

II

In Medias Res

DR. ARBUTHNOT (Coroner's Report)

Consider, please, this scene we gaze upon.
The victims strung about, the guests all gone.
And as we note the blood-bespattered wood,
We must observe: whatever is is good.
Rationally we excise cruel and kind
Creating thus the scientific mind
That looks on beauty with a cold surmise
And faces horror with unblinking eyes.
The pregnant female's wound is not a slash
Or other journalistic balderdash,
But an incision running thirty cent.
The neck at twenty-two degrees is bent.
These data are collected with due care
Amid the corpses dancing on the air.
Our tapes in hand, we measure wall to door,
Crawling with caution the ensanguined floor.
Without statistics it's too soon to say,
But one suspects there might have been foul play.
Why, then did Nature struggle might and main
To form Man's ratiocinating brain,
If when confronted with the quizzical
We seek solutions metaphysical?
No! Facts are facts and leave facts in their wake;
Instinct and feeling let the Devil take.

III

Mise en Scène

ARIEL (Descending)

Here is a gentle music felt
That floats along the air
Like Zephyr's soft enchantment
Drifting near.
Here are sunlight colours heard
Echoing through the room
Like beating wings of angels
Rushing home.
An emanating glory spreads
Its presence over all
Beyond illusion's shadows
Mystical.
Redeeming Beauty raises us
Beyond the reach of pain
Where transcendental crystals
Cool like rain.
The lark above cascades his song
Until the sun has set;
Moving us to movement, so we
Dance to it,
We tread our measures wedded to
The spirit not the form,
Perceiving not the screaming,
Murdered worm.

IV

Post Prandial Meditation

We are the hub that holds the spinning wheel,
The grain of sand that stores the solar heat.
We are, all, forests filled with unicorns
And jungle drums that throb a hidden beat.
We are a corridor for cosmic winds,
A sea of waters, and a burning flame;
We are each happening, each birth, each death;
We are the rules, the player, and the game.
But Loki whispers slyly in our ear:
'What if the candle's worth more than the play?
The game is boring when you only lose;
Why not submit to chaos and decay,
Close shop, and vacate from this bloody scene
Descending to the realm of asphodels?'
The heroes and the aesir gods reply:
'Some integrating principle compels!'
The answer chases Reason from the field,
And punctures Romance so its bubble bursts,
And Caliban crawls whining to his cave
While Ariel sips the nectar that he thirsts.

Finis

Too soon our luncheon date is done;
Too soon we see our places cleared;
Too soon Time points the way we go,
Where Sharon and her friends have gone.

Ed Siemens