

## MEETING THE KING

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*Echan Holloway*

There was nor reason nor implement,  
but the situation demanded immediate  
attention, such as only the felonious  
and demonstratives could conjure. I  
connived my way up to door where  
I was instructed by the mutton-lipped  
cabdriver turned door beast that wisdom  
lies very far to the east. He took my hand  
and patted me on the head. I followed  
rather doggedly, like a tree on a leash  
being dragged through a Monterey  
bistro. At the second door my life changed.  
I became calmer and more intuitive  
and was able to think back to my second  
wife and the dresses she wore. Don't  
you dare demand shorter, she'd simper.  
Dourly, we entered and at the coffin  
paid our respects as all peons must do,  
laying on our hands, listening for mice  
that might creep through the wall at  
any passing moment. I made a fly buzz  
sound with my lips and thought of old  
hard death and then we were off for  
there was a grand old party out in the ivied  
courtyard. A collection of lint and flesh-  
particle and electron slowly dimming out.

Their eyes were watery as I passed  
and filled with crescent jewels as I waved.  
When we reached the ultimate interior,  
a guard met my demise, said life is a couple  
of darkly-lit horse stalls. There I took leave  
of everything I knew; he guided me into  
the castle and up the tubercular stairs  
around the crowds, the mulish duke,  
the miniature duchess speaking mutely  
of strawberries and creme de menthe—  
even the prince, long impaled on the griffin,  
laughed within them when they laughed.  
And then, of course, the king, wiry, not  
at all like an insect, but a spring all heavy with  
butter. His hands stuck prehensilely in his robe  
when he spoke of his children, of grain,  
as we walked down the water, to the sea.  
Each horse died as we passed, each buck went  
into rut, the grass and moss around us were  
forever torn. It may be this this, but it may be  
that. It may be here or out there, his head bobbling—  
it was the death of my daughter; her teeth  
chattering in the casket you passed, my son  
passing from room to room in a postmortem  
limpid state. This is not fashionable. He lifted  
his hands from his robe, cobbed, stubbled  
and turned to the ashen withering fields  
until I took my leave by the shore, stepping over  
stones with my story brisk in my chest,  
the starfish bristling as I slipped through  
into the city and into the street and still farther  
into the there talked about, the house and the room  
until there it all left me again, withering away—  
the inanity, the mucus of the sneering, the stupid,  
sad king. Judas would have laughed like me.