

MEETING THE KING

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.