

ISAAC

(Gen. 22:i:xv)

Your dream, my father, woke me from my bed
To cut and cleave the faggots for my pyre,
Burning already in your blazing eyes,
Dazzled by brilliant God, blinded by fire.

I am that lad, conceived of your despair,
When cold to colder cuddled each to each
And thug desire came creeping up behind
To choke your thin and thick-veined throat of speech.

Spawned of your midnight fear to press down time,
To limp your erstwhile leap, give age the lie,
I am that lad, the leasings of your loins,
Whom you bade live that you might bid him die!

Then know, my father, aged Abraham,
When, by high flames of fear, I saw you true,
My trust your truth - both vanished in the smoke,
When glint of blaze on blade no pity knew.

A comfortable suicide, indeed,
To offer up your flesh and blood in mime!
So brimming youth must bleed the years away
That shrivelled age might gulp its dram of time!

No thanks to you that blade ne'er drew its blood!
A lucky thorn-bush snared a luckless ram,
The which you seized as supernatural sign
To let me live to be the man I am.

No safety now in wisdom of our sires;
No comfort in the chanting of their charms;
For I have felt the altar at my back,
And found my father's rope around my arms.

And ever shall we know, when meet our eyes
Across the fire, by chance, when day is done,
That once you drew the knife to sacrifice
To your inhuman father, this, your human son.

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