

Seftis-Kotad

An imagining

I

Deep below the darkest waters
In the ocean's secret trenches
Down into the stygian darkness
Where the seabed spews its sulphur
And the viscid water's silence
Drowns all trace of light and reason
Hunched and huge in muddy mantle
Sleeps the loathsome Seftis-Kotad
Reason killer, light destroyer.

Soundly sleeping from his labours
Seftis-Kotad had no equal
For obscuring light of wisdom
For devising superstition
For inventing gods and demons
For suppressing thought and clearness.
Fifty thousand years he laboured
Secretly among the people
Whispering lies and feigning shrewdness
Forging falsehood, teaching dogma
Spawning shamans, warlocks, witches
Raising priests, empowering prophets
All across the oikoumene
That the people might be mastered
And their understanding narrowed
And be forced into delusion
And be fearful of their dying.

Seftis-Kotad, never ceasing

By religion fostered hatred
 Falsehood versus falsehood setting
 Persecuting unbelievers
 Demonising deviation
 Casting out the voice of reason
 Brooking not one contradiction.
 He made rules of domination
 Choice depriving, pleasure banning
 Girls and women subjugating
 Each infraction cruelly punished
 Till each thought with guilt was laden.
 On his grim and cankered planting
 Seftis-Kotad fed with relish
 Feeding on the hate and warfare
 Feeding on the pain and anger
 Feeding on corrupted wisdom.
 Then at last, his hunger sated
 Down he sank in torpid stupor
 Slumped into his foetid chasm.

II

But within his ravaged wasteland
 Tiny shoots of knowledge sprouted
 Spry but often swiftly strangled.
 All too few emerged and flourished
 Persecuting pontiffs dodging
 Past the powerful clerics creeping
 Through the priested thickets edging
 Tiny sparks amid the darkness.

Sky-turned faces, watching, marking
 Evidence amassing slowly
 Speculating, postulating
 Doubting dogma, testing theories
 Ptolomeic doctrine quashing

Truth-revealing, science shaping.

Dauntless voyage of exploration
 Seeking in the distant islands
 Found new beasts and birds of beauty.
 Careful lithic observation
 Found the trace of ancient lifeforms
 Prompting questions of creation.
 From these signs ideas unfolded
 Revolutionary thinking
 Challenging religious tenets
 Scorn and mockery both outlasting.

Men of science, brilliant thinkers
 Gradually dispelled the darkness
 Shedding light on what is truthful
 Undermining superstition.
 As the tides of knowledge broadened
 Reason breached delusion's strongholds
 And the people started doubting
 And their worship slowly withered
 And the priesthood's sway diminished.
 Girls and women, subjugated,
 Found their power, their freedom relished
 Pleasure was no longer banished
 And the search for knowledge flourished
 And the people amply prospered.

III

Deep below the darkest waters
 In the ocean's secret trenches
 Where the viscid water's silence
 Drowns all trace of light and reason
 Hunched and huge in muddy mantle
 Dreamt the loathsome Seftis-Kotad.

Troubled dreams, uneasy, restless
 Sensing changes, stirring, writhing
 Dumbly rousing, wakening, hungry
 Hard he stretched his sluggish carcass
 Rising ponderous, vast and awful
 Shedding ancient silt and ordure.
 Slowly his dominion scouring
 Lurching, starved, he fathomed changes
 Contemplating reason's progress
 Close he marked religion's waning
 Powerful in the light no longer.
 Close he marked how science flourished
 Driving out sour superstition.
 Yet he found his old religions
 Still had force in nescient nations.
 Still believers, prone to feuding
 Fostered conflict with dissenters.
 Seftis-Kotad, roused and ready
 Once more worked among the people
 Countering the rise of reason
 Sowing doubts about the science
 Aggrandising counterfactuals.
 Shameless liars spouting nonsense
 Demagogues dismissing dangers
 Scruple-less, these useful puppets
 Unenlightened feet bewildered.
 Proven truths he warped and challenged
 Till confusion wrapped together
 True and false, now both mistrusted.
 Reason drowned in tides of lying.

All across the oikoumene
 Seftis-Kotad spreads his poison
 Stringently dissent suppressing.
 Light of knowledge he expunges,

Weeding out each skilful savant
 With the fear of retribution
 Driving them to meek compliance.
 And the ancient stifling darkness
 Censors all the peoples' discourse
 Blotting out the books of record.

War and hatred, pain and anger
 Storm and flood and fire and heatwave
 Sure results of lies and darkness
 Lay the world in ashen ruin.

IV

Should you yearn for cheerful prospects
 Seeking hope as night is falling
 Haply you may chance on starlight
 Tiny sparks amid the darkness.
 Powerless seems such frail existence
 Shall they blossom, shall they ripen?
 Herald they a Great Renewal?

Clear for them a patch of garden
 Free from darkness, free from ruin
 Drive away the lies and hatred
 With your laughter drown the nonsense
 Do away with superstition
 Do away with gods and demons
 Do away with Seftis-Kotad
 Honour science, honour reason.

You yourself must be the gardener
 None but you can fight the darkness
 None but you can nurture learning.
 With compassion build a future
 Let your legacy be wisdom

Let your epitaph be love.

Chris Adie