

## Tattered Time, or That Starred Ensign

Ethan Scheelk 2024-02-26

Tricking, fading salvations,  
shreds of scrap  
blissfully sway in winds.  
Ensign tatters  
trick the eye.  
Swirling star  
on field of green,  
green planted new  
with insouciant souls,  
fortified irons arms,  
and equine. Alarmed  
squawks of craven  
crows pick the flesh  
shorn from bone.  
Take their hearts  
says the crone,  
needless suffering brought  
to heel.

Billow verdant cloak,  
speaking head on pike,  
calmly say your  
name, wait to be  
acknowledged.  
And lo he says:

Green field will grow  
again, though  
rough-trodden by  
future feet.  
Terrible olden green,  
Of temptrous tatters,  
—The star traps you in—  
shall clean your  
soul, till  
ensign tatters  
trick the eye.

Healing hands of  
time cease  
the murmurs of  
sobbing wind,  
coax torrid sea  
of terrain to  
gentle laps at  
the shores of those  
who will later stride,  
green of the ways of life.

A garden of unplanted  
rows sprouting  
pretty pimpernels,  
poisonous liars,  
dead distended  
fingers as roots,  
helms as helpful  
planting pots.

Triplets will be born  
here, will make soaking  
snow angels.  
All to brown faded first,  
fresh snow freezes  
the angels in place.  
And in the cold is  
warmth, warmth finds  
no cold—creeping salvation,  
sterility supposedly,  
the field a moorland  
in micro, a quiet  
cloak screaming,  
— “I died here!” —  
its subtle cues lost  
in echoing craters  
and six unaware eyes.  
The plant-men  
delayed in their plots.

And lo, spring I make  
it, the pikèd man  
says, and the vision  
snaps, an elastic attack.  
A toothed worm eats his eye.

Three giggles and  
whispering wind,  
plucked pimpernels  
and arranged  
flower pots. Long  
grass begs to be  
weaved, a new  
generation of blossoming  
trees in the clearing.

Those angels and a  
pinwheel of leaves  
are in communion  
with the past and  
the world's guiding arms,  
enchanted sight,  
chanting whispers.

The first  
hears of their birth,  
of mama's battle  
and her triple spoils.

The second  
hears her of the cursèd  
land, red rivers of  
fellowship and strange  
plants and the roots  
of the world and  
the maw which  
stole away that  
green ensign, jade  
psychic snake  
twirling, eyes in  
the negative, fools  
fools—flick of  
double swallow tails enrapture souls  
and pales their faces.  
Take a breath now.

Her name is Carys,  
crying now, dragged  
from catalepsy by loving  
brothers.  
Her mind, the House  
of Carys, an invaded  
fortress, ransacked  
and attacked, the  
aura of villains  
leaving a cruel scent  
where even vigorous  
cleaning shall serve  
only to wear it thin;  
her canvas painted  
double dark verse  
whispers and reeling  
spinning spying eye  
alongside.

The third  
heard or encountered the  
destruction same.  
The past in Green,  
present in pleasant blue  
and red in future.  
Or is the past the  
future? — All viewed at  
once, wondrous leering  
of fuzzy vision leans,  
too heavy to hold —  
lightning a splint on  
saving hands. Carys  
love rescue punishment  
reflection.

Gulping breaths, pain in  
young bodies — save the  
first — unnatural and  
untrue pain — a liberation  
that should not need  
be freed.

That pinwheel of leaves,  
that device of torture  
    is gone, disappeared,  
        absent, dispossessed,  
that cruel eye  
that sick serpent  
that ensign enchanted  
    the twirling eye  
    tricks the star  
that...  
that pinwheel of leaves  
is gone.

Now for me sun is  
Reaching peak, find  
myself seated, a kindly  
host of a greater guest.  
Chills I felt when  
mind explored, the  
essence of every flake  
felt as if I were dipped  
in sticking tar which  
at a whim all plucked  
and preened abrupt  
to children's minds.

I was the whirlwind  
which tore them  
and the star which  
all around me lies.  
I ate a trapped  
grouse and placed  
a piece of cooked  
breast in the mouth  
of my bard.

In a spot miraculously  
shielded during the  
sun's downward ceremony of the  
changing of the guard,  
I place my back  
against the shameful tract  
of toiling men, searching  
in soil the core and final end.

Slower now, I beg of  
him, no promises kept.  
The pike his muse he begins anew:

The years whipped by,  
tripping over themselves.  
Firstly was the  
flashing of the day,  
the tides of warmth  
and cold night played

into light and in  
greater movements too.  
I turn to a  
growing tree and to  
the side I step to  
the selfsame cottage  
and three.

Land maturing, time  
relaxing, dirt paths  
snaking yet reaching  
stable state and  
agreement — up the  
hill to the house, down  
around, down flight,  
through — the resting  
place of movement's hand.

The three found new  
Words for themselves:  
Men and woman  
and tilling the earth  
and planting seeds  
and giving heart and love  
and cooking, thawing,  
    salting, chopping,  
    burning, mixing,  
    freshly bake it...  
and all else in  
between  
    and full of  
    remember of  
    cull attempted  
    by leave-let wheel:

and looking past golden  
field to caravan stranger.

Women and girls, a  
feeble man and growing  
boys, a bubble made  
to survive. Distrust

bonded to new  
intersecting bubbles,  
then one, the strengthened  
enlargèd pearlescent  
film descending to  
Earth as hewn trees,  
a receding line, for  
walls of the once-living  
to protect those now  
surviving, to thrive  
atimes in dire times.

War. War in the East.  
A force like the winter,  
muddening, sterilizing  
the living. Those forces  
allied are Cataclysm.

Cannons march West  
digging pockets for  
pools of spreading acid  
rain those enemies  
call to Earth. Sorcerers  
blessed by their lord  
the same, to them now  
known the Lord of Chaos.  
More will join this troop  
and our three in humble  
fort, village, town, castle  
that will be.

Earth begets quarry  
stone, merchants from  
somewhere, and a  
people horded to  
this shrunken patch-  
-work Western land.  
Water wheels push  
time forwards, a time  
of peace and ceased  
marching, by convenient  
river severing.

The three, natural rulers  
and leaders by nature,  
and good still while  
chosen, yet the first,  
become in the decades  
a triad, a person a Cariad.

As hinted, wood walls  
enbark stony skin  
and some shrink to  
arrows. Farmland, where  
possible, outside the  
fortifications. The stone  
infection spreads and  
its great pustule a  
castle.

The cottage long destroyed,  
mother sadly buried, and  
a lifeless inner courtyard,  
Carys clad in speckled  
grey. She of late less  
adventurous, a comet  
leaving and returning  
the heavens.

Her face was a  
translucent veil she  
thought opaque, a  
view to true life-terror  
askance steely eyes:  
her vision as a child,  
a promise long unmet  
and an unclaimed bounty.  
The termination of green  
within her grasp. One  
brother, the first, trusting  
but unawares, the third  
in favor and great  
backing. A life of  
making it her own,  
and wariness.

A translucent veil, yea,  
she of declined suitors  
and inner turmoil, combat  
hazarding looks and  
catch breath poorly  
hid. Pimpernels were  
the sign of their lady,  
a kind red on white,  
strong, prosperous, and  
surprising. A sort of  
memory of none  
experienced — forgotten.

And so the pimpernel  
takes its own form, a  
little sprout taking hold  
in the gap of memory,  
winding causeways its  
roots and pinned lapel  
the pollen. Planters  
created and filled,  
Carys uneased.

These people shall  
make The Kingdom  
of Pimpernel, grow  
closer to unity and  
find in that  
condensed ball of  
matter pride, and  
identity. Some foolhardy  
few, convinced perhaps,  
continue mining the  
depths of pride and there  
find resentment anew —  
scorch the winter,  
destroy the clouds brought  
by East, return the land —  
their symbol  
the Western Sun.

Some will say the  
Setting Sun was  
spawned of sorcerer plot,  
the uneasy peace a  
poisonous clot.

All that can be said,  
for shame, was that  
Green was their bend,  
— and shall be their end —  
after the scorch, clean  
skies, healthy rain,  
— Let the old rain  
melt its masters —  
and regrowth.

And so we return to  
that twisted ensign  
of old. That jade  
snake, envenomed  
smile foretells time,  
flick of tail convinces  
of self-determination,  
a great beacon to  
the East, a green fire  
raging from the  
Western sun, whirlpool  
and a trap, flagging  
the diminished West  
as a returned figure of note.

The Pimpernel Kingdom  
will be destroyed,  
clouds will march  
and crowds shall  
meet in “gentle  
conversation”, the  
snake beheaded burned  
and buried.  
They will agree the  
West will fade. As  
they will.

Yet the pimpernel  
will always persist, in  
slight form. On lapel  
worn as cultural  
memory, in bad luck  
to admire setting sun,  
a distrust of clouds  
in the East and a  
tale of why  
this isle so frequently  
shaded.

And so ends my foretale,  
says my bard.

I walk to the  
bluff, site of  
cottage I suppose,  
the setting sun  
terminal warmth.  
I pick a little flower  
and hold it to  
my heart.

My bard requests  
death, is not life  
in living undying.  
The flower his last  
taste of food and  
as asked a swift  
stabbing strike of  
blade to bridge of  
nose. Before his  
end I asked him thus:

Will it really happen?