

## *Of The Gallery*

At last, that past chapter of life was shut  
and time enough elapsed since tragedy  
collapsed my heart, that tender part of me  
which once loved art, but strife drugged up and cut.

Now I have longed to fall, the smitten swain,  
headlong bluster—erupt in lustrous strain!  
for days, weeks, years; mah feels are strong again  
and steeled with strategery in each vein.

For fiendish fires singe my flesh and bone  
(a lovely way to wake from comatose)  
and blood evaporates, fresh wounds are sewn  
with melting heat blackened and bellicose.

Meanwhile, innards numbed by cryogenic frost  
(the absolute zero in this cold soul)  
are plugged up, stopped and barred from getting lost  
inside the succubus's stinking hole

that can bevex those whom the muse eludes;  
one must be wary walking 'twixt these trees,  
for rotten harpies harden arteries,  
perplexing dashing swains with lame études.

Thus with cautered skin, stern icicle gut,  
and twilit path to strut that leads to art  
(therein enthrall some newfound muse's heart  
whose loins, when sexed in sin, beget great smut),

we must reflect that art is random shaped;  
although I dasn't waste my breath on such,  
a sanguine eye pines for pieces a-draped  
right bully in the museum's clutch hutch.

So poetaster strode that night to find  
within the chambered ventricles a strange,  
resplendent masterpiece and interchange  
by Bridge my several lines for art enshrined.

Would it be this work or the next that might  
alight on owls wings to sweep the night mass  
off its feet, into the arms of some sweet lass  
to nest with potential by the glowing light?

Perhaps we should be so lucky, uncured  
and thus still stained by hopes that art is fine.  
Reach out, naughty strumpet, I'll make you mine  
and teach you things with verse that get you stirred!

Therewith my circuit closed and no more floor  
to haunt or guards to bore, thought surely that  
I missed some bold, alluring autocrat  
to whip my words into a rousing roar.

But once more through evoked no bardic poems,  
and in that ghastly silent gallery,  
felt *I* was on display and art watched *me!*  
which damns a rhapsody to catacombs

patrolled by janky gnomes and sad Furies.  
No, forgo composing tomes to those shades,  
and save your poesy ways from brave crusades  
that "raise awareness" through their novelties,

to shame the status quo and shake our frame.  
In æons past, when much of life was guessed  
or attributed to gods never impressed,  
inspiration sang without shifting blame.

But my male gaze scratches all problem glasses,  
bends them temples while you yelp for justice,  
scrapes the painted face off half the masses  
and gives you verbal rabies while I bust this

poem that I planned would be more kind to art  
and be some ode to lonely soldiers, set  
the bridal train in motion to jumpstart  
angels of wild invention and to get

one piece alone to churn my rancid bile,  
and tug the puppet strings so as to make  
another go at things with art, but stake  
and pyre break my faith that we'll reconcile.

Stoked with drought kindling, make affliction yearn  
through passion's flame to lick the heel of suicide;  
I tell you, many were the nights in which I lied  
myself to sleep and thought she might return

in glory, back to launch the crazed attack

like how I fought when I first sought her hand;  
but no muse provoked, no piece spoke — sad sack!  
felt more estranged than prowling solo land.

O myth of Valkyrie and unicorn,  
flee! and artsy maids of loose, hairy girth,  
aroint thyself — I'll snatch a virgin birth:  
from barren loins alone this poem is torn.

Thus bled, I'll chop the body off the head  
and trample it beneath my meter's foot,  
then roast the bones and with that brackish soot  
shall paint my face for war against the dread.

I'm going ghost and entering monk mode.  
Yes, as I exit with wrecked dreams, depart  
in mithril sleeves and greaves, such lighter load!  
weaving leaves into my eaves to guard that part

inside my heart that once loved art but died  
aside two thieves — the King of the Muse  
left behind, tacked to the wall and crucified  
whence three days hence shepherds fall for the ruse.

For now it seems the whole scheme is corrupt,  
and mad disrupting screams rip scenes around  
me down and brutal laughing without sound,  
ground the stump into salted earth abrupt.

These bones shan't rise again after all;  
such a finer tomb as this we've nae stuffed  
amidst busts, oiled boards, a video wall,  
bench, chain, acid flashbacks and doodled cruft,

not that my fluff is quite exempt from jeer:  
recall that *I am nothing and no-one*,  
some random guy with verses you might shun  
because I made a word or two rhyme here,

or worse, constrained this lyrical hearse to  
fit inside some kind of form, bound and gagged:  
"This isn't done — that isn't said! Don't do  
the evil your muse begs after she's shagged!"

But since I am unflap'd by your disdain  
and fork no lightning here today — alack!  
I only hoped to fall in love again,

I say, and prayed that art would take me back.

And so I list it thus—hark you, mark well:  
as one who lost his prized insanity  
and lived to tell, all art is dead to me,  
all verse and song is likewise doomed to hell.

This rare-earth elemental, once cursed,  
has slain the past and lain to rest that joy,  
which once had doubled up with love that boy  
who changed to man, when forced into his worst.

All that to tell: I think these works are grand,  
but leave behind empty heart, mind, and hand.

--August Jirovec