THE SONG OF THE RIVER

INTRODUCTION

The last light of the long day
Casts dark shadows marking the
Peaks of our ambition and the
Final breaths of monuments

The shadows ripple on the
Unhurried rising waters
Consuming and growing with
The certainty of great forces

Not in anger nor in judgement
Do the tides turn upon the
Impermanent remnants of
Our stories, now just reflections

And in that moment, a last
Reflection, both infinite
And bound by the finality
Of the closing verses.

CANTO I: THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE

The awakening was not recorded.

It must have been terrible
Great and also terrible

An awakening of the dark and of the light
Which before meant nothing

It must have been beautiful
Terrible and also beautiful

An awakening of the land and of the water
Which before meant nothing
It must have been unfathomable
Beautiful and also unfathomable

An awakening of matter, living and not
Which before meant nothing

It must have been powerful
Unfathomable and also powerful

An awakening of bodies and of minds
Which before meant nothing

The wrenching from nothing to something
Must have been great and also terrible.
But the awakening was not recorded.

CANTO II: SPECIES

No one knows why people grow
And none remain the same;
The gods grow old but do not age -
They’re dead now but in name.

Do you want to be like them?
You think them man’s ideal?
They seem to take small pleasure making
Life a long ordeal.

We lent them out or killed them off
Whichever served us best
For history is told by not
The strongest but the blest.

Do succeeding generations
Of our species yet evolve?
If so the immortals’ tragic fate
Was a riddle that we solved.
CANTO III: CONSUMPTION

I will consume you
I will consume the air around you
I will consume the very body that holds you
I will consume the unknowable forces that make you

Is this need, or want?
Or Love?

CANTO IV: SURRENDER

We are strong and we are weak
At the same time
We will bend and we will break
At the same time

I’ll surrender up myself
In this life time
You’ll know the power to subsume
In this life time

Unable to move or breath
At the end time
My surrender is submission
At the end time

Is this need, or want?
Or Love?

CANTO V: SONG OF THE BUILDERS

Something from nothing
The incomplete form of our kind
The weak body and the strong mind

Something from nothing
The long unbroken expanse
The terrain for man to enhance
Something from nothing
Which offers answers to questions
Driving manifest expansions

Something from nothing
The meeting of necessity
And burning creativity

Most are unremembered
Bodies and sometimes minds given
In sacrifice or at least in service
So that we may find peace
Or at least comfort
In a world that seems unsuited
To the incomplete form of our kind.

A song for the builders
Who gave us
Something from nothing

CANTO VI: PLEASURES

There seems no end
To the delights of the senses
Offered freely and without a reason
If you think about it

Sometimes the sights or sounds
The tastes or smells
Are overwhelming and it hurts
To endure this secret knowledge

All forms of expression
Falling short of the truth
And leading to worn paths
To seek an equally secret art

Which might offer a taste
Of that taste, a vision of that sight,
An echo of that sound
That haunts your memory
Maybe it will touch something ancient and true
And we will not be apart.

CANTO VII: THE POWERFUL

Have you ever felt powerful?
Even just a little?
Has someone needed you?
Enough that you could
Wrap yourself around them like a great snake
And know that the future depended on you alone?

Imagine the multitudes
Huddled together both in fear and in brotherhood
The far greater serpent wraps around them all
And the fate of the many depends on it alone.

Will you get what you want?
The instinct to constrict and feel close.
Or is it better to offer them all
A choice, and watch the world unfold?

CANTO VIII: THE PEOPLE

Looking down from the sky
(A marvel that a man can fly)
You see the tiny moving dots
Each person made of dreams and thoughts

From here it’s quite impossible
Their lives to truly chronicle
They look no different, act the same
From this airy window pane

You wonder why they make a fuss
With facts and figures tenuous
To “prove” their rights from blood derived
Based on knowledge much contrived
Rising higher every second
The darker heavens call and beckon
Now there’s no one left to see
So maybe man should let man be

CANTO IX: SONG OF THE STARS

There is a faith in looking up
At the night sky
Knowing that countless generations
Have seen these same lights

There is little else that we can share
So perfectly with
The great many people whose time
On earth has left no evidence.

The violence of the universe
Unfolds as a calming presence.
The destruction of distant forms
A nightly affirmation of creativity.

CANTO X: NOSTALGIA

Every song and every poem
Could just be a seed
Bearing fruit in later years
Our memories to feed

That tugging feeling in your chest
We both know it so well
The use for it is dubious
As far as we can tell

Neither sad nor joyful
The sensation does defy
A worthy definition we
Can simply quantify
A reminder of things in the past
That we cannot relive
Deep memories that make us “us”
Nostalgia’s gift to give.

A fleeting sense that we are one
A timeless, seamless unit
A chord, a phrase that can recall
The universal spirit.

CANTO XI: BALANCE

He dreamed of things that had not come to pass
He dreamed of places that had not yet been made
He dreamed of people that hadn’t been born

Made in the image of nature boundless
Roads modeled on streams passing through forests
Buildings modeled on mountains piercing skies

She dreamed of things that had once come to pass
She dreamed of places that been unmade
She dreamed of people long since departed

The future reflecting man’s destiny
The past refracting possibilities
The awakening lies in the balance.

CANTO XII: SONG OF THE GOLDEN AGE

We had once been great
Wielding unknowable powers
Magic, perhaps, or some secret knowledge

Stories and legends
Captivate imaginations
Even today, though no magic remains
A dangerous world
For exploring and conquering
To make your own legend while there was room

We had once been great
Though we don’t know exactly when
The Golden Age ended. We are what we are.

EPILOGUE: SONG OF THE RIVER

The last light of the long day
Casts dark shadows marking the
Peaks of our ambition and the
Final breaths of monuments

The waters rise to swallow
Everything that was or would be
The realness of cities and
Diaphanous thoughts alike

I am the last one to look
Down upon the waters vast
And know the infinitude
Not below but reflected

And in that moment, a last
Reflection, both infinite
And bound by the finality
Of the closing verses.

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