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On the Recently Discovered Mass Grave of Mice

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Rituals for an Uninvented Religion

I.

In June, when the earth is properly soft, it is customary
to unearth the dead and extract their lead fillings
These you melt down into a cup,
and when you drink the sacrificial wine,
you inherit their strange sense of humor.

II.

Flowers are inappropriate to send to a dying man,
for, as we know, no one willingly courts death.
Instead, send him a mask carved with the face of evil man
already dead. His twin in hell will grow jealous
and order him to Heaven.

III.

In August, you must eat two fish of exactly the same type
and weight, especially those which are bottom feeders.
In this way you learn humility. One fish is for the man
you are now, and the other is for the man you hoped you'd be.

IV.

It is always inappropriate to carry coins in a sock
No one knows why. It just is.

V.

When making a grave marker, you must mold it from wax
and stick a wick in the top. If you journey to the grave yard
at night and find a flame, you must make an offering
of reading material, for the literacy of the dead.

VI.

If a child is born on leap day, he must be renamed
every four years, because technically he did not exist
for the previous three. Life is hard for the leap day child.

VII

On the day of judgment, no carnivals are allowed.

All animals must be freed to find their own heaven,
and leaders of all nations must provide alternative forms
of entertainment, preferably outdoors.

-Kevin Griffith

On the Recently Discovered Mass Grave of Mice

*While tending their flocks, shepherds in New Zealand
uncovered the skeletal remains of 300,000 mice.*

Explanations live and die that way.
The nameless little ones decide
to die in places so rock-strewn
and desolate, you'd bet it was sheer boredom
that did it. They gather together
among clover and good grass for flocks
until one common denominator is found:
a million million bones,
each light as a child's first question

Once, the world answered our prayers
We had a name for shepherds
and the like who saved us, who
stumbled upon our souls' last trace
and witnessed the dance that brought us
together, all fur and mammal heart,
our minds heavy with the unexplainable drive
toward the loneliest places.

But like it or not, we are all part
of that good flock, mouse or lamb.
Our graveyard rush is so common
that to ask why mice die together,
according to their own time,
is a question as plain as your name in stone,
as whole towns of name and stone.

-Kevin Griffith

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