

*LE BÉTYLE D'AIL*

## ACT I

### URBAIN

I fled a loosing battle.

My blood was pouring down my arm, my finger nails, pearling drops of hot blood mixed with sweat. I was exhausted.

Haggard and defeated I walked by a cave, and from its gaping hole in the ground an icy river was pouring.

The sounds of the forest birds were swallowed by the cave. A bitter and earthy smell was floating above the lake. I could hear the slow gurgling breath of the grotto. A woman arrived on the banks of the river, she wore a shiny ruby around her neck, it pulsed on her chest, ready to hatch. She caught my gaze.

As she pulled the ruby from her chest, her eyes snapped shut. It seems that she became blind without it. She removed her dress and let it drop onto the ground. Placing the ruby on it, she bent down, and felt her way toward the river. Cupping her hands together she began to drink the icy water, and once satiated she slowly immersed herself and began swimming toward the center of the lake, her long hair slithering behind her in the water.

*A break in the cloud, an inviting luster of eerie light fall onto the jewel.*

I saw my salvation in the ruby. I could buy my way out, change my life, disappear.

I walked down to the banks and hesitantly picked up the blood red jewel. Suddenly it would pulse with heat in my hand, I felt the gaze of a thousand eyes on me. I turned shuddering to see a ghastly army of toads and snakes emerging from the mud, called by the stone, drawing near.

As I tried to run they enveloped my body, belching a slimy venom, it leached into my wounds, I could feel the acidic liquid traveling through my veins, sickening my blood, it reached my heart.

I collapsed onto the ground under the weight of the creatures, the density of my body dragging me deeper into the mud. I could feel my life pouring away through all the cuts in my skin, draining away into the viscous soup.

I loose track of time. My skin turns blue. As I dry out in the sun it grows loose and velveteen. My flesh melts, dripping into the mud, my bones are whitened by the light of the sun. I am petrifying, my jaw is sealed shut. My lungs are liquifying, slowly turning into a sick black substance.

With each breath I take it pulses up my windpipe, pouring down my chin, dripping underneath me. I can feel maggots crawling under my velvet skin. They hatch, I hear the scratching of their wings. My ribs, in a painful last attempt to escape, begin to distend from my body. They claw into the earth, desperately trying to drag my themselves away from the lake. They give up and harden into place.

In my stillness I hear the infinite buzzing of nature. Birds alternate their chorus with the insects that populate my surface. I wonder if the ruby is still near me, perhaps it could revive me with its heat.

## ACT II

### LA VOUIVRE

I move between the fields. Crops rise under pads of my feet.

With each step I take, my nerves system grows, extending further into the land. Enterwining with the roots of the plants.

I can hear the soft vibration of the vegetal world.

Insects swarm the rotted carcasses of the beasts that I care for, attracted by their pungent smells.

I witnessed the birth of mankind from mud. I watched, as their first cities covered the countryside that is my home. They called me by many names, I watched them age and die, in the blink of an eye.

Full of grievances, and of hopes, all carrying the weight of their self directed destinies.

I accompany them to the realm of the dead. As they cross the river I swim by their side, smiling.

It is a hot and sunny afternoon. As I walk by the lake's shore, I see a beautiful knight, armour shining in the sun. He seems exhausted. I stop walking and remove my clothes. I hunger, I must feed. I enter the lake and swim underwater into a cave, hidden from the sun by a fold in the land. As I approach, the deep sound of the earth fills my head. A white fluid is pearling from the stalactite above me. I bring myself closer to this stony utters, pressing my palms against the surface of the water, and drawing myself up into the dark air of the cave to suck at the chthonic ambrosia. My hands grope on the wet and moist surface. My lips are pressed firmly against the stone hardness, drawing its milk into my body, leeching.

My forehead suddenly burns hot, someone tries to steal my stone, my true eye, the beautiful knight? Curious, I turn my attention towards him, I hear his keening wails as he is dragged down by my children into the mud. Their eagerness betrays my own. This one has aroused my interest. He belongs to me now, I will take him as a lover perhaps. I approach him, I sit by his side. Fascinated, I gaze at his body metamorphosing into a thickened puddle of organic life.

His body is calling the birds and insects away from their nests. He offers it to them to feed on. His blood is theirs to taste, his flesh for them to peck, I am touched by his generous gift. I tend to him, I reassure him.

*I offer you the gift of immortality, I turned your blood to stone, I matched your heart beat to my own. Instead of the incessant drumming of human time, I give you the glacial throb of centuries, of millenia. Your heart beat is a rending of stone across fault lines. I will show you how to appreciate eternity. For years, man has built his cities on my back, vainly trying to alter this by constructing, fortifying, structuring. Buildings crumble to dust in my heart beat. Now I build cities on your back, my knight.*

*Your body hosts colonies of life, fungus blooms inside your skull. Your petrifying remains are the life blood for nature itself. A life that I measured not in human terms, a birth to a death, but the roiling movements of cell mutation across millenia. You once imagined yourself as a unified whole, a discreet being, sealed up tight, master of your own destiny. Now, you begin to realise what you really are, all orifices wild open. A landscape along whose highways life travels, down your oesophagus through the caves of your lower intestines. A royal bettle, enters the antichamber of your rectum.*

INTERLUDE

*LE SONNET DU TROU DU CUL*

Obscur et froncé comme un oeillet violet,  
Il respire ; humblement tapi parmi la mousse  
Humide encor d'amour qui suit la pente douce  
Des fesses blanches jusqu'au bord de son ourlet.

Des filaments pareils à des larmes de lait  
Ont pleuré, sous l'autan cruel qui les repousse,  
À travers de petits caillots de marne rousse,  
Pour s'en aller où la pente les appelait.

Ma bouche s'accoupla souvent à sa ventouse ;  
Mon âme, du coït matériel jalouse,  
En fit son larmier fauve et son nid de sanglots.

C'est l'olive pâmée, et la flûte caline ;  
C'est le tube où descend la céleste praline :  
Chanan féminin dans les moiteurs éclos !

Paul Verlaine

*THE SONNET OF THE ASSHOLE*

Dark & puckered like a purple floret,  
it breathes; it hides humbly amid the moss  
still moist with love that trails the gentle floss  
of snowy cheeks into the heart of its skirt.  
Filaments like strings of milk are wept-  
above, the cruel wind drives them across  
the russet marl, along the little clots,  
& they vanish, lured in by the gradient.  
My Dream often kissed its suction cup;  
my Soul, jealous of this corporal fuck,  
made it its musky trough, its tear-filled nest.  
This the ecstatic olive, this the tender flute,  
this the tube down which falls the celestial fruit:  
o womanly Canaan in moistures fenced!

Paul Verlaine

DUO

LA VOUIVRE

The moon rises above us.  
Look as its melancholic light blesses our marital bed.

Your coat is slipping off,  
let me help you.  
I will rub my own fur against your sensitive skin.  
Let me cover you with the musky smell of this land.

Witnessed only by the tender gaze of the moon,  
She draws my head down to her sexe.  
I could smell the ripe scent of her innards.  
I felt a tender pad of tangled hairs stroking my nose.  
She grabbed the back of my neck, pushing my head deeper, closer.  
Her body was as hard as marble.  
As I tried to move toward her, a sound of broken bones uttered from my ribcage.

I remember the day you screamed toward me,  
this night is the night your screaming stops.  
Your voice is now a dry rasp.  
The countryside is mute.

URBAIN

The night falls on us.  
From the ground under my nose, a smell of moist humus.

FINAL

*L'HEURE EXQUISE*

La lune blanche  
luit dans les bois.  
De chaque branche  
part une voix  
sous la ramée.  
O bien aimée.  
L'étang reflète,  
profond miroir,  
la silhouette  
du saule noir  
où le vent pleure.  
Rêvons, c'est l'heure.  
Un vaste et tendre  
apaisement  
semble descendre  
du firmament  
que l'astre irise.  
C'est l'heure exquise!

Paul Verlaine

*THE EXQUISITE HOUR*

The white moon  
Gleams in the woods;  
From every branch  
There comes a voice  
Beneath the boughs.  
O my beloved.  
The pool reflects,  
Deep mirror,  
The silhouette  
Of the black willow  
Where the wind is weeping.  
Let us dream, it is the hour.  
A vast and tender  
Consolation  
Seems to fall  
From the sky  
The moon illumines.  
Exquisite hour.

Paul Verlaine

*LE BÉTYLE D'AIL*  
by Nils Alix-Tabeling

Presented and produced by Kunstraum London

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Acting and singing      Andrea Baglione  
Music                      Mathieu Levet

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KUNSTRAUM

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