

IX

THEY ASKED PILATE TO HAVE THEIR LEGS BROKEN

ἠρώτησαν τὸν Πειλᾶτον ἵνα κατεγῶσιν τὰ σκέλη
(John 19.31)

they've all gone in
and while they eat the golden calf I stand outside
stoning Caiaphas

Annas got away he's hacking the website
adding scare-quotes to the cartouche like locusts
flanking the glyph of the lamb while the Jordan
runs red with blood, squirms with the tadpoles
of plagues averted, cut short with a few
smart blows to the legs

they brought the spear, the clouds
unfolded, and after the blood, water
caught in a cup cleaned on the outside
dregs of a life lived in the shadow
of Egypt

they bring it to Pilate and he washes
his hands in it
carefully, one gold ring at a time

then hush a moment and listen as he raises the dead
branch broken just now from the tree of the knowledge of good
and evil by a noose lighter than an evening kiss
its leaves dry as paper, whispering

*quod scripsiscripsi scripsiscripsi scripsiscripsi
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scripsiscripsi scripsiscripsi scripsiscripsi*

till he plunges it in, lifts it dripping
high over his shoulder to sprinkle the people with
truth

and they did not cease
the sword did not sleep
and they built
Jerusalem

little wonder their impatience now:
this is taking too long please break their legs
there's a party on please break their legs
we can't wait forever please break their legs
this is a bit of an eyesore please break their legs
when will this be over please break their legs
and take them down

κατεγῶσιν: that they be broken