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TEXT poetry

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3 poems

Smoking gun

Spreading on the mattress
of a nicotine deck chair,
Hemingway's clone raises a lighter
to a stub of Havana cigar,
catching the eye of my Canon Legria,
snapped with the legs
of his sextogenarian blonde
companion sticking out
in the lower right-hand
corner of the frame.

Given a push,
with timed exposure
and a tumble on the path,
the snap of the legs
at the greater trochanter,
caught by the magnetic
resonance image scanner,
gives a surgeon joy.

Racked retractors
make the way for the jigsaw.
The whining blade bites bone,
spattering the face mask
like the head in the brush chipper
in that scene from *Fargo*.

The surgeon perks
as the old arthritic hip gives way,
wielding his ceramic ball
in its titanium socket.

With a couple of bangs
as sharp as Christ on nails
with a sock around the throat,
soon the old man will spray
and dance the can-can,
if I delay the shutter speed
and he keeps right on puffing.

Steady now,
his belly rises,
portside out,
starboard home,
rocking on a makeshift raft
with a Galapagos tortoise
blowing the sail with a bellows.

I squat, peer into this snapshot,
then tap a sniper's view
into the keyboard, mind's eye
raising steel to my shoulder.
Plugged between his dentures,
the stub of that flaming stogie
positions in the crosshairs
of my infrared sights.

Lazarus

Few men who stink as I do
have been pursued by poetry,

whether the muse be chimera, sphinx,
or other distortion of the great cat.

Why must I be the kill to whom
she returns at the end of her prow?

Fresh from the sepulchre,
mine are as fleet as any athlete's feet.

I rise, reeking of tinea and sweat
less fragrant than vanilla

since my sweet sister poured the myrrh
I missed all over Jesus' feet.

Yes, I am up for it, stretching
at the door of the tomb at dawn,

ready to break into a run before
poetry springs to maul me again.

Last night I dreamed of slow recovery
from injuries inflicted by the beast.

I found myself bandaged
in a military hospital. All I could do

was swing my plastered limb
wildly to starboard as my good arm

tugged at the triangle on the iron cot
at the nightingale end of the ward.

Our Lady Phosphorescent
cast candle light into the hollows

where once there were my eyes.
With no defence to mount,

I tossed a glass of atomised sago
into my tangle of sheets

and promised weeping Jesus never
to give up the struggle to rise.

Simpson and his donkey, 1915

As I pace the memorial
late in November,
distracted from revision
of a writerly paper,
mythology brays at me
from a gauche statue.

Children wired poppies
into the bridle
of the bronze donkey,
where they remain
from Remembrance Day.

Side saddle,
the wounded digger
keeps his slouch
as a shell burst
shrapnels his chest.

Simpson's blind.
The intelligent eyes
are those of the donkey.
Why, oh why,
must the ass die?

Andrew Leggett is a writer and editor of poetry, fiction, interdisciplinary academic papers and songs. His two poetry collections Old Time Religion and Other Poems (1998) and Dark Husk of Beauty (2006) were published by Interactive Press. In addition to medical degrees and postgraduate qualifications in psychiatry and psychotherapy, he holds a Research Masters degree in creative writing from the University of Queensland and a PhD in creative writing from Griffith University. He was editor of Australasian Journal of Psychotherapy from 2006-2011 and is the current prose editor of StylusLit. He is a Conjoint Senior Lecturer in the University of Newcastle School of Medicine and Public Health.