

Harvest Bowman, Poetry First Place, 2021

THE STRANGER

The clay stretches far and wide,
Like a great rolling dusty tide.
A sea of yellow, a choking gold,
Upon it are strewn young and old.

I watch.

They build their homes from mounds of clay,
Living and dying, day by day.
On the land they till the ground,
Sometimes singing without a sound.

I listen.

They live, they work, they make a din,
They cry, they weep, they eat, they sin.
And it is this sin that strangles them while they work,
Dragging all of them into the dust and dirt.

I see.

"The evil that I would not do- that I do!"
Cries the disciple, pierced through.
"And the good that I would do- that I do not do!"
Across the dust is strewn some dew.

What is it like?

They live, they suffer, they work, they die,
Sometimes they keep silent, sometimes ask why.
A new grave is built, marked by a stone,
As a child dies, not yet grown.

I don't want this.

"This is the way of the world," they say.
"The grave will claim us all- one day.
When this dusty earth becomes too rough,
We find we are made of weaker stuff."

Not true.

Torn apart from one another,
Their whole foundation is ripped asunder.
Their houses burn to the ground,
Pulled apart by the raging crowd.

I want to help.

They drown in their sea of lies,
But even in this, hope never dies.
They cry out for one to save them,
From their physical and spiritual prison.

I will save you.

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven,
I make the earth change, and the fruit ripen.
I watch all the suffering and joy that you possess,
And I want to save you from this earthly mess.

I come to you.

I walk on the land, I walk on the water,
I face the cold and the heat of the fire.
I confront your leaders who have led you astray,
I am here before you on this very day.

I am here.

I speak out in front of the crowd,
My voice rings to the ends of the earth- though not very loud.
I face temptation, hardship, hunger, and fear,
I do this for my children, still very dear.

I am beside you.

They cry and stretch out their hands to me,
As numerous in suffering as the raging sea.
Multitudes bow before my face,
Asking a tiny portion of My infinite grace.

I freely give.

"Save us from the dust that torments us!" they cry aloud.
"Save us from pain- save us from the crowd!
Save us from leaders who have gone astray,
Overthrow Rome on this very day!"

I will not.

"My kingdom is not of this world," I proclaim.
I do not seek earthly fame.
And so their cries of joy change to howls,
Wicked screams and dark yowls.

I know.

They bear me away to a piece of wood,
Where I will find what it means to be good.
In this world so dark and sick,
I am nailed upon this wood and blood runs thick.

I am in pain.

It hurts, it stings, it bleeds, it pains,
Oh for some water, oh for some blessed rains!
I am forsaken above all else,
I long for my Father- nothing else.

Save me!

I let go, I release, I breathe, I am gone,
This was like one tragic song.
I am dead, I am sinking into the world below,
Yet even in this land of the dead I glow.

I am dead.

Ghostly hands stretch out to me,
As ubiquitous as the calm sea.
Where neither sun nor moon glow,
I am in the world below.

I am in Hades.

But how can I know Hades?

I have not sinned.

I am in Hades.

Yet I am a Stranger to Hades.

I will win.

Here I am.

Come if you dare.

The wicked one reaches out to grasp my soul,
And realizes it is too late to withdraw his hold.
He is nailed to me, thick and fast,
I am here Satan, I have found them at last.

Yes.

Light breaks through the dark chasm,
Exposing all to the glory within them.
We all break into song, although made from clay,
We are all free upon this Paschal day!

I have made a path!

Cracking stone, falling earth, rain from the sky,
We are all new and I know why.
I rise up from this hole in the ground,
I have triumphed over wind and cloud.

I am alive.

Now I have faced the final cross,
I have not counted the world as a loss.
I have looked for heaven and brought all near,
At last, the Stranger is here.

The cross saves.

A Stranger to sin, a Stranger to true death,
Life is all that I have left.
I walk this earth like a radiant Light,
And I show all how to share in My might.

Follow Me.

I rise from the ground and into the air,
I have overthrown the serpent in his hidden lair.
I have trampled on death and overcome the dark,
So upon my words, do now hark.

I will be back.

Do not follow the sayings of the earth,
For it will only lead you away from worth.
Walk this path blameless here,
To become a Stranger, never fear.

I am the Stranger.