

4-1-2011

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Kristina Kroger
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Recommended Citation

Kroger, Kristina (2011) "Three Guitars," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 32: No. 2, Article 61.
Available at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol32/iss2/61>

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Three Guitars

Kristina Kroger

The sound of three sweet guitars enters my mouth and tastes like tangerines. I wander into the park, and perchance, find people gathered round. “A show?” I think, “A band playing, playing three guitars?” But as I come forward, past the crowd’s innermost ring, I find not men with stringed cellos spilling sorrow, three men with cellos spilling sorrows, but one woman in their stead.

A beautiful woman, young with shining grey hair, sallow skin like callow candle wax, swathed in ripped and ruined robes. It is her voice weeping three guitars, harmonies thrown forth from her throat, enrapturing her circle of spectators. But she is bound, by a thin silver chain, twined about her throat, her sweet throat, spilling sorrows.

My eyes become closed, still tasting guitars and tangerines, not wanting to note the tether, the beauty bound, the sorrowful slave. I just want this: peace in the park; I want to eat the soft noises coming from her. But my eyes must open, encapsulate, understand, and I...see her.

Nameless nymph in the park at night, noiselessly weeping, singing with a voice like three guitars, I am guilty, as I gaze upon your grey visage. You open your eyes, they are stormcloud skies that roil softly with thunder and light. Those around, they surround, drunk on the voice like three guitars, throw silver coins at her tortured toes, then bumble and stumble into the dark.

The opiate stupor falls away from me (like a cloak made of ostrich feathers), the chain winds away, I see, from she with eyes like stormy weather. She turns on-toe, silent now, and follows the silver train up through the park. I almost cry to see her go, as I would to mourn the dawn’s last lark. On the tether’s end, I know, is the one who keeps her caged, who draws her notes into the night, like the player. Like the three men playing, with stringed cellos spilling sorrows.

Gaelic ghost, going and gone, following the path to the secret prison: I stand and watch, waiting, silver coins like sparkling snow scattered on the floor. And from the secret womb of night, I believe, is a small boy, an orphan boy with a careful cup, scooping coins, all that glitters in the park, into his vessel. Then he too pitter-patters after her who has gone.

Should I have brought forth my knife, my fang of moonlight, and used my saber to sever her tether, and free her with the voice like three guitars? Again, I am guilty, of craving the taste of guitars like tangerines.

I turn, burn, burning yearn, as I throw long gazes over my shoulder into the night. I do not follow, she of sorrow, though I will be here again tomorrow. For under the shelter of the night, where all things are rendered bright, I will be here in the park, getting drunk, very drunk, on the voice like three guitars.