

**G.NA**

## **"If I Were Tickled By The Rub Of Love"**

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If I were tickled by the rub of love,  
A rooking girl who stole me for her side,  
Broke through her straws, breaking my bandaged  
string,  
If the red tickle as the cattle calve  
Still set to scratch a laughter from my lung,  
I would not fear the apple nor the flood  
Nor the bad blood of spring.

Shall it be male or female? say the cells,  
And drop the plum like fire from the flesh.  
If I were tickled by the hatching hair,  
The winging bone that sprouted in the heels,  
The itch of man upon the baby's thigh,  
I would not fear the gallows nor the axe  
Nor the crossed sticks of war.

Shall it be male or female? say the fingers  
That chalk the walls with green girls and their men.  
I would not fear the muscling-in of love  
If I were tickled by the urchin hungers  
Rehearsing heat upon a raw-edged nerve.  
I would not fear the devil in the loin  
Nor the outspoken grave.

If I were tickled by the lovers' rub  
That wipes away not crow's-foot nor the lock  
Of sick old manhood on the fallen jaws,  
Time and the crabs and the sweethearting crib

Would leave me cold as butter for the flies,  
The sea of scums could drown me as it broke  
Dead on the sweethearts' toes.

This world is half the devil's and my own,  
Daft with the drug that's smoking in a girl  
And curling round the bud that forks her eye.  
An old man's shank one-marrowed with my bone,  
And all the herrings smelling in the sea,  
I sit and watch the worm beneath my nail  
Wearing the quick away.

And that's the rub, the only rub that tickles.  
The knobby ape that swings along his sex  
From damp love-darkness and the nurse's twist  
Can never raise the midnight of a chuckle,  
Nor when he finds a beauty in the breast  
Of loever, mother, lovers, or his six  
Feet in the rubbing dust.

And what's the rub? Death's feather on the nerve?  
Your mouth, my love, the thistle in the kiss?  
My Jack of Christ born thorny on the tree?  
The words of death are dryer than his stiff,  
My wordy wounds are printed with your hair.  
I would be tickled by the rub that is:  
Man be my metaphor.

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