

Three Poems from Packing a Bag for Mars

the owl man

his pockets full of dead mice
the owl man haunts the darkness

and why would he not?
he likes the silence
his pupils are dilated
his fingers grow feathers

silent shadows sweep
about him and
about his offerings
like agitated thoughts

they're friendly enough
he whispers *once they've*
become accustomed to you

and *they'll eat each*
other's young he adds
as though it were a good idea

his is an oilskin world

pulled inside out
darkness in light
light in darkness

stretching his arm into
a branch from which
small white furry fruit
hang stiffly until
every last one
is plucked

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snow white and the bitter dwarf

weeping willows
slightly balding
sickly yellow
branches dangling

snow like dandruff
softly falling
on the shoulders
of the landscape

saliva snow with
white flecks flying
in the souging
wind's bad breath

snow like mucous
membrane staining
the land kerchief
spread out beneath

sickly yellow
bitter aloe
fingers dangling
in the floes

willows weeping
wind is coughing
earth is wiping
heaven's nose

inanga

little white-bait,
fickle lightweight
swimming up the creek,

dappled whitebait,
out-of-sight bait
with a cellophane physique

tell me straight, bait,
would you bite bait
if I paddled in your pool,

or would you wait bait
lying prostrate
thinking me a silly fool?

but don't forget, bait,
with a net, bait,
I could catch you and your ilk

then with an egg, bait
and a beater bait
and a litre, bait, of milk

mixed with flour, bait,
to a batter, bait,
butter waiting in the pan
on the hot plate
where it spits, bait...
and a deep dramatic tan

may await, bait,
you'll look great, bait
I do believe, bait, never better

although I wish, bait,
on my dish bait
you were just, bait, a little fatter

it's a checkmate
for a cheeky bait
and a fate, bait, very bitter

so don't ever bait
or call me stupid, bait
or you'll end up in a fritter

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