

Classic Poetry Series

John Beevers

- poems -

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Atameros

The palace with revolving doors was mine
And three of us went up its steps
To the tall room whose walls were made
Of the furred eyes of moths.

One only went within -
Atameros the Greek;
With steps that slid along the floor
He slipped inside and closed the door.

Whilst Williamson took off his boots,
Produced three large synthetic mandrake roots
And softly musicked Home Sweet Home
Upon his dirty pocket-comb.

Within the room a metal thread
Uncoiled to greet Atameros;
He placed his bowler-hat upon its head
And skated round and round
To the delightful sound

Of eight trombones,
Five saxophones,
And a lynched nigger's
Rattling bones.

Meanwhile, I hung out of the window and spat walnut-shells into the sea breaking on
the walls far below.

Two doors he tried
One opened wide
He saw his face inside.

Down the corridor he walked -
Sixteen stools behind him stalked -
Till lie came where sponges grew:
Then Atameros really knew
Which end of the twig was forked.
This was the beach where the rats bred
So, reaching to the shelf above his head,
Atameros took the bowl
And strewed with seagulls' eyes
The crystal inches of the sand,
Setting them in a bloodshot squint
Towards the blue Madonna
Whose thighs nipped close the heavy clouds
Above that grey and troubled sea,
Tile soup of dead melt's bones,
Which washed with long-whipped moan,
The stumpy coral teeth of Fraser's Bay.

But time was getting on.

Atameros took out his watch.
It fluttered from his hand
And minutes, like a cloud of nervous bats,
Brushed past him
As the eyes closed down their lids.

And I, still in my tower, lost vast sums at Crown and Anchor, for I was competing with
the sun and the mailed sword.

He spat and every globule turned to pearls
That ill low-toned concentric whirls
Ran on before him
Till lie came
To that high room without a name
Where all things shift
And yet remain the same.
On tile black bed she lay
With little ants at play
About the lobe of each her ears,
Biting each minute three small fears.

Once every day they stopped,
Scoured the clanging skies
Caught all the turtle-doves
Tore off their heads
And from their beaks
Built her a tower
Which ringed the moon
With wide lassoes of bloody twittering tongues.
Her breasts were glass
Through them he gazed
And saw the beatings of her heart.

John Beevers