

# THE SYPHILIS OF SISYPHUS

Paris, 1952

Scene 1: Sisyphus' Garrett

Sisyphus:

Nature sold me a lie, and I've kept the deceit  
On my face to remind me: Her falsehoods repeat  
Like the seasons renew. Same advice every time,  
Because Nature can counsel me nothing but crime.

Her Utopian swindles profess to be cures,  
But infect generations. While smeared with manure  
As a young, naive milkmaid, in apron and braids,  
I, too, was Revolting on top of the barricades!  
Praising the Rustic, I fell to Gourmet  
And my radical urges were lost, due to Neglige.

Shamed by this Lapse into Luxury's error,  
I hid my defections, 'til this happy Mirror  
Revealed a new cause for which Sisyphus shoulders  
The burdens of charm, crying, "**Make Beauty Boulder!**"

Crush earthly pigments! Grind rocks to a dust! Flint  
And waxes make Nature submit to adjustment,  
While camel hair, sea mud, and squid ink insure  
That while fishing for Compliments, I use Allure!  
My Cosmetics prove I won't be whipped by these rashes:  
If Nature gives scourges, then Beauty gives lashes!

Strong discipline needed to bury these pimples  
With inch-thick rice powder. Complexions aren't simple,  
And nothing's so Gouache as to be badly painted!  
Technique must be pure because Nature has tainted  
Life's mortar with pestilence, desperate to wreak  
Her rude havoc of impudence right on my cheek.

These sores burn with an anger so hot that I'm incensed!  
With Incense still more fragrant than sweaty and hellbent  
Provincials extolling fresh air, while they're scoffing  
At Beauty's demands! Turn your head, and keep Coiffing!

The Toilette is noble! But taste's in the toilet.  
If Art is a carrot, the masses will boil it  
To jelly, while praising it's crunch and suggesting  
I eat it! I'd rather eat shit and die jesting!

I've a horror of Vegetables, a hatred of Floral,  
Nature's so foul she makes mushrooms A-morel.  
Some mushrooms I know, when asked, will admit  
That the root of their heartache is: "**We stem from shit!**"

Cruel Biology, rendering blemish inherent  
To produce! I ask Nature, what kind of parent  
Begets in the darkness, these sprouts in neat rows  
Just to turn on a Blight! I hereby propose

Drastic measures that don't give an inch to Demeter:  
This gift that's she's given so kindly will cheat her  
Inadequate rations of one dried-up teat per Mouth!

(Sisyphus leaves her garrett and descends the steps  
towards the street.)

Genius needs Nourishing Beauty to suck!  
So I'll go into labor, while pushing my luck  
That this child will put Natural regimes to the saber!  
Make lumps, proletariats! Knock up your neighbors!  
When pickets fail, propagate! Throw down the barrier  
Methods. Hunt Nature down, bind her and carry her

Out on a rail. Give her breast a last squeeze:  
See! nothing comes out of her Wet Nurse's Parodies!  
Her milk comes from cowards, and thus I instruct  
Babies how to throw bottles, so Milk Ducts.

Scene 2: The Streets of Paris

Sisyphus:

The incursions of Nature's expansionist empire  
Convinces me: Venus's doctrine requires  
Disciples, but Matthew and Mark are Lukewarm  
On the subject of training a carbon-based life form  
To modify God when his Archetypes falter,  
To break them up, glue them, and worship the altered!

I fluctuate daily, a dogma enabled  
when Jesus himself said:

**"This Manger's too stable!  
The stalls are too crowded!  
The stench here is terrible!  
Give me a knife,  
And I'll make these limbs Parable!"**

But who would you trust with that Blade? it was Nature's  
Own children who grew into Guilloteenagers!  
They told an armed mob: Just cut off your hand  
And the wrist will be History! That stump speech was panned

Because rational girls prefer necklace to headless.  
Thank vanity nightly for keeping the progress  
Of history minimal. Hark! On the street  
I hear the pitter-patter, Epater la Bourgeoise Feet!  
Put yourself in my shoes, little Hounds, come to heel,  
Show me tableaux of Beauty! Inflate my ideal

Type of learning! I'll rise, like Lavoisier's Gas,  
And grade your displays from the top of the class.

Scene 3: The Saltimbanques perform

Saltimbanques:

Twinkletoe, Twinkletoe,  
Denis P. Diderot  
Dreamed of a government  
Led by his heirs:  
Nightmares so ghastly, so  
Anti-Enlightenment  
Gave him the shock of One-  
Hundred Voltaires!

Secretly, Secretly,  
Queen Marie Antoinette  
Studied her Algebra  
All night in bed,  
Scholars remarked at the  
Mathema-Titian-Haired  
Beauty's resolve to make  
Knowledge Widespread.

Brainy McBrainyton  
Maxmilien Robspierre  
Perfectly memorized  
Jean-Jaques Rousseau;  
Citizens bored by his  
Hyperverbosity  
Shouted in unison,  
"Merde! Sans Chapeau!"

"Drown in a Tub of your  
Cardiovascular  
Blood, wretched Traitor!" Screamed  
Charlotte Corday.  
Caught underwater, and  
Covered in lotion  
Jean-Paul Marat sputtered,  
"What did she say?"

Jellytart, Jellytart  
General Bonaparte's  
Senti-Mentality  
Worried all France.  
He cried Saccharine tears on the  
Banks of the Vulgar, while  
Waterloo-Waterworks  
Spotted his Pants.

Higgeldy Piggeldy  
Two Young Hegelians  
Spilled lots of ink as they  
Struggled to Parse  
Sequential crisis in  
Historiography:  
First it's a Tragedy,  
Then it's a Farce.

Baron Unbearable  
Haussmann, the Architect,  
Told by Napoleon:  
"Rip down the Slums!",  
Systems of Boulevards  
Incontrovertibly  
Re-Parised Paris for  
His Bourgeoise Chums.

"These Obsolete Beauties, how  
Far they have fallen!"  
"From Queens of the Evening, now  
Deeply in debt to their  
former Acquaintances' Charity!"  
"Sad!"  
"Don't You know your own Mother?  
'Twas I who baguette you!"

I BAGUETTE YOU!  
I BAGUETTE YOU!  
I BAGUETTE YOU!  
I BAGUETTE YOU!

(The Saltimbanques beat each other with loaves of bread.  
Sisyphus enters the fight and is quickly arrested by the  
Morals Police.)

Scene 4: La Salpêtrière Hospital

Sisyphus: (speaking to the Matron, and then to the Physicians)

You Lords with no manors! No border, no fence  
Keeps my Spleen within bounds, 'cause I'm pissed off by Continnence!  
Bile International! Now Nature laughs  
To see Beauty debased, getting drunk on this bitter draft:  
Art For Art's Sake! I toast Nature's spite!

**“For the sake of those Philistines packed in your Samsonite!  
Pull down their temple of health, brick by brick!”**

But I've never been life, all the days of my sick!  
My blistering wit, and it's deep lacerations  
Are signs of advanced forms of Syphilization!

A pillar of culture like me can dispense  
With these Charlatan Quacks, and their *Breeches of Confidence!*  
Such Elegance calls for a well-tailored speech  
To solicit new Genres, and increase the reach

Of my own University's rhetoric! It's rated  
With sterling repute! For my tongue's S'il-vous-plated!  
So please, enroll now! For you well can afford  
The tuition that flows through Unbillable Cords

To a cloister that's moister, a womb of one's own,  
My Sorbonne in the oven is nationally known  
For it's Queen of the Faculties, Tenured, Emeritus:  
Draped in the garment of Beauty, I wear it thus!

'Till Polemic Dances help me to disrobe,  
Because medical men need the Patients of Job!  
And I make so much Beauty, that yes, I am prone  
To stay friends with my Excess! Just like the well-known  
Polyamorous Bride, who announced with a grin  
After wedding the crowd:

**“Goodbye Nature, and Hi, Men.”**