

Nicolas Sykes

A POEM: FOR MY BROTHER

Scalpel, pencil and paintbrush.
Brother. This is how I remember you:
sitting in front of T.V.
talking to a clown
and cutting plasticine into ribbons
on a soldier's chest.

I haven't the eloquence to carve
those silver, miniaturized young men
with their sable-hair-thin lace
and their packs hoarded with necessities,
or the virtuosity to draw
those camp-fire veterans
with their rough, unhurried faces
ruttled by wagons laden with war,
camp-followers and spoons.
(Your room reminds me of a camp
abandoned on the road from Moscow.)

I too would like to create something
that could be shot or looted;
like a golden goblet
with a 'DO NOT TOUCH' sign attached.
(You're going to do commercial art,
it shouldn't be too hard for you.)

But I have only these falling words
that can't be kicked or stolen.
(But perhaps I'm wrong,
newspapers are full of vandalism.)

Yet at least I can recreate
the smells of artrooms
in which you're still billeted
and with this pen (though more
harshly and with more questioning
than you) I can carve
cardboard castles on a page.

*(Brother. This poem isn't about you:
poetry is never about reality.
This poem is only a collation
of theories and paradigms
that landed near your feet.
You only abetted them in their desertion.)*

Nicolas Sykes

MORNING

"Hey! Who turned the darkness off!?"
No one answered,
so I got out of bed
and turned it on again.