

Shelley Mason

MORNING STAR

The Predikant's farewell to his murdered family

Farewell island
It is still night
the jagged cry of seabirds
sends us on our way

and so on to Batavia
with subdued finality
and so much lost
tainted by our memories
we shuffle on towards the quickening light

Goodbye family
wife and children
all but one
crushed into the sodden earth
with no time for a whispered prayer

I hear their moans in the tired wind
see the silhouette of crude instruments
blunt and roughly hewn
but lethal on that brazen night
My kin hacked soullessly and pummeled into
stones
rougher than the hands who delivered the blows

I strain to catch men laughing
at the mewling of my little ones
who claw their way clumsily
out of this world

seamen who toast
with reddened wine
my wife's last sacred breath

Now before my tearing eyes
the seabirds encircle our island
and darkness breaks around me

In my mind I'll stay and be their scarecrow
my blood and being stuffed
into a ragged frame
and quietly assembled
on the thirsting ground
to watch over my family's abandoned grave
and keep the birds at bay

My daughter moves way from me
How do I address my remaining child
I let her slip below deck
To tend to her festered wounds

The ship pulls ominously away
Guided by the morning star.
With none more alone than I.

