

# LOLA RIDGE

## 'Secrets'

Secrets  
infesting my half-sleep...  
did you enter my wound from another wound  
brushing mine in a crowd...  
or did I snare you on my sharper edges  
as a bird flying through cobwebbed trees at sun-up  
carries off spiders on its wings?

Secrets,  
running over my soul without sound,  
only when dawn comes tip-toeing  
ushered by a suave wind,  
and dreams disintegrate  
like breath shapes in frosty air,  
I shall overhear you, bare-foot,  
scatting off into the darkness....  
I shall know you, secrets  
by the litter you have left  
and by your bloody foot-prints.

SYLVIA PLATH

*'Daddy' (1/4)*

*You do not do, you do not do  
Any more, black shoe  
In which I have lived like a foot  
For thirty years, poor and white,  
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.*

*Daddy, I have had to kill you.  
You died before I had time——  
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,  
Ghastly statue with one gray toe  
Big as a Frisco seal*

*And a head in the freakish Atlantic  
Where it pours bean green over blue  
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.  
I used to pray to recover you.*

*Ach, du.*

*In the German tongue, in the Polish town  
Scraped flat by the roller  
Of wars, wars, wars.  
But the name of the town is common.  
My Polack friend*

SYLVIA PLATH

*'Daddy' (2/4)*

*Says there are a dozen or two.  
So I never could tell where you  
Put your foot, your root,  
I never could talk to you.  
The tongue stuck in my jaw.*

*It stuck in a barb wire snare.  
Ich, ich, ich, ich,  
I could hardly speak.  
I thought every German was you.  
And the language obscene*

*An engine, an engine  
Chuffing me off like a Jew.  
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.  
I began to talk like a Jew.  
I think I may well be a Jew.*

*The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna  
Are not very pure or true.*

*With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck  
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack  
I may be a bit of a Jew.*

SYLVIA PLATH

*'Daddy' (3/4)*

*I have always been scared of you,  
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.*

*And your neat mustache  
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.  
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You——*

*Not God but a swastika  
So black no sky could squeak through.  
Every woman adores a Fascist,  
The boot in the face, the brute  
Brute heart of a brute like you.*

*You stand at the blackboard, daddy,  
In the picture I have of you,  
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot  
But no less a devil for that, no not  
Any less the black man who*

*Bit my pretty red heart in two.  
I was ten when they buried you.*

*At twenty I tried to die  
And get back, back, back to you.  
I thought even the bones would do.*

SYLVIA PLATH

*'Daddy' (4/4)*

*But they pulled me out of the sack,  
And they stuck me together with glue.*

*And then I knew what to do.*

*I made a model of you,  
A man in black with a Meinkampf look*

*And a love of the rack and the screw.*

*And I said I do, I do.*

*So daddy, I'm finally through.  
The black telephone's off at the root,  
The voices just can't worm through.*

*If I've killed one man, I've killed two——*

*The vampire who said he was you  
And drank my blood for a year,  
Seven years, if you want to know.*

*Daddy, you can lie back now.*

*There's a stake in your fat black heart  
And the villagers never liked you.*

*They are dancing and stamping on you.*

*They always knew it was you.*

*Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.*

JAY HULME

# *'The Edge of the Past Horizon' (1/2)*

*I was standing in the sea, of course,  
drowning my sorrows by the sand.  
The land wasn't made for men like me,  
for those made monsters  
manipulated into madness,  
men told we had this sickness  
that maybe the waves could wash clean.*

*I leaned towards the light out there  
on the edge of the horizon,  
the skies on the edge of observation,  
blacker blue than my own;  
the tone of my voice wavering slightly  
as I said these ocean prayers:*

*Lord wash these waves over me  
cleanse me completely,  
catch me up in this buoyant sea  
and wash me out to greet thee  
in the light that floats out there;  
untethered by the weather  
and the squalls that fill the air.*

JAY HULME

# *'The Edge of the Past Horizon' (2/2)*

*Was this a prayer, or a portent?*

*Was drowning what I meant  
or the desire to see completely  
what the Lord meant for me,  
in God we're held eternally  
and in that promise we are free;  
the hands of God aren't bondage,  
but guides that help us truly see  
the people we were made to be.*

*And stepping softly from the sea  
the sand scraped all the fear from me,  
this salt, this cold, this honesty;  
I drew the waves deep into me  
and by their rhythm came to see  
the man that I was made to be;*

*so maybe, in the end it's true  
that we are guided by  
the hand of God, though yet unseen,  
we live beneath Their eye,  
and if we squint a little  
at the edge of sea and sky,  
the horizon shines like every star  
exploding as we die.*

WH AUDEN

*'Secrets' (1/2)*

*That we are always glad  
When the Ugly Princess, parting the bushes  
To find out why the woodcutter's children are happy,  
Disturbs a hornets' nest, that we feel no pity  
When the informer is trapped by the gang in a steam-room,  
That we howl with joy  
When the short-sighted Professor of Icelandic  
Pronounces the Greek inscription  
A Runic riddle which he then translates:  
  
Denouncing by proxy our commonest fault as our worst;  
That, waiting in his room for a friend,  
We start so soon to turn over his letters,  
That with such assurance we repeat as our own  
Another's story, that, dear me, how often  
We kiss in order to tell,  
Defines precisely what we mean by love:-  
To share a secret.*



WH AUDEN

*'Secrets' (2/2)*

*The joke, which we seldom see, is on us;  
For only true hearts know how little it matters  
What the secret is they keep:  
An old, a new, a blue, a borrowed something,  
Anything will do for children  
Made in God's image and therefore  
Not like the others, not like our dear dumb friends  
Who, poor things, have nothing to hide,  
Not, thank God, like our Father either  
From whom no secrets are hid.*