

## **The epic of the godlike peasant**

Now listen to the song of the earthbound Shorty,  
the labourer of the field who suffered under the yoke of fate,  
the ploughman who walked in the dust day after day,  
surrounded by rubble, stone and weeping skies.  
Oh, praise be to Joe, the ox, his most faithful friend,  
now snatched away by the merciless hand of old age.

There was Shorty, the dust-covered farmer, bent by life.  
His heart as dull as the iron of the plough,  
his hand as rough as the field he ploughed.  
His wife was anaemic, emaciated and trembling,  
but she pulled the plough at his side,  
She laboured where once the ox broke the ground.  
Oh, how Shorty sighed, the wretched bovine,  
heavy with thought and yet without wisdom,  
he liked to compare his fate with that of faithful Joe,  
who, like him, had served blindly in life.

Then he looked up, the servant of the field,  
at the dark firmament, at the signs of doom.  
The clouds were black, hovering like death itself,  
threatening, trembling, ready to send the floods.  
A flash of lightning, purple and wild, split the sky,  
slashed the zenith like Odin's sword.

And Shorty, the ox-like one, stared upwards,  
felt the wrath of the gods in the firmament.  
His wife, the weak one, mumbled words,  
nothing but stupid chatter, hardly worth the air.  
But then a thought came to him, pure and simple:  
The lightning, the messenger of the gods, might bring blessings,  
power and wealth, as the ancients said  
and it was written in the holy book of elaborate ignorance.  
He was granted a wish, strong and terrible.

He spoke without meaning to, full of rage at the moment:  
'Oh, that the woman would drop dead!' -  
And behold, there she sank to the ground, lifeless,  
soft as a feather pillow she fell to the ground.  
Shorty, the stupid man, scratched his head,  
Death came quickly, but even wisdom stayed away.  
'Well then,' he said, 'it seems to be true,  
I am a god, and anything is possible!'

What followed was folly born of power,  
for Shorty, the king of fools, began to wish.  
The cows became as colourful as rainbows,  
the chickens began to learn to talk.  
His pigs, oh wonder, rose gently,  
flew high above the land, like birds in the wind.  
Then he grew a beard as long as a rope,  
and his boots became golden bowls.  
Grain grew from stones, the rats began to sing,  
and water flowed backwards, the rivers gushed out of the mountains.

But with every wish his misery swelled,  
the farmer, the labourer of the field, was lost in the chaos.  
'Oh,' sighed Shorty, 'I've had enough.  
The flying of the pigs is no longer a comfort to me.  
What good is power to me if I remain a fool  
and not stupid enough to enter the absurdistani parliament  
that even the gods drive to despair?'  
And so he made his last wish:  
'Gods, I beg you, let me be mortal again,  
without desires, without power, just a simple man.'

And behold, fate was fulfilled.  
Shorty, the half-wit, was now back to his old self,  
a poor, dull farmer, but free from the burden.  
He stood in the field, alone with the stones,  
his plough without power, his wife without life.  
So he returned, humble and small,  
to the life that was meant for him,  
with nothing more than the earth and the plough's burden.

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