



Paper Mill Press

Jesus of Rats

Bernard Wills

“Jesus, it’s the Jehovahs!”

For one glorious evening
I was the rat catcher
at the Scanway Restaurant
on Dresden Row in Halifax
circa 1990 something-

escaped the dish pit two whole hours
chasing the thick rats with a stick
handed to me- special- for the job
by crazy Warren the head line-chef,

which I only thought of today
on account of those ‘damn Jehovahs’
(my sister’s phrase)

who pounded on my door
to tell me there were many rats in this world
(which I knew already)
but did I know there was a divine rat-catcher?

Yes by necessary inference
from the presence of rats
it follows that there is a rat-catcher in chief,

all-perfect in his pest-controlling ways,

and it is not Buddha, Mohammed
or Dagon of the Philistines
who catches the rats
but Jesus of Nazareth
who had been a working guy like me

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and one glorious evening
got a break from scraping melted cheese off pans
and loading cutlery into the dishwasher
to go kill rats

and had gone on from there
to his own full-time extermination business
being ambitious and taking to the work well

(while all I bashed was one old sickly rat
who had the jakes already
from a crooked draught of warfarin)

and so the Jesus of rat-catching
went on to be the Jesus of everything else

and the rest was history as they say

but here's the lesson,
that working stiff from Nazareth

never forgot the place he came from-
still rolls up his sleeves
to go on rat patrol, those rats
grown too ass-fat from the gourmet scraps

like half chewed pepper steak
or limp asparagus
with moldy turbot bits-

punches his clock like one of the guys-

like Phil who cut the vegetables
for years and years and never caught a break
or Igor whose thick hands
made delicate whorls of pastry-

works like a bastard...still





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though he could sit
day-long in his office pondering the books

and that, after many years of seeking,
is finally a theology I can relate to.



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Bernard

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