

CUCKOLD AND KING

Uriah swore his skilled sword to Israel.
A Hittite, he strove to prove allegiance
to Zion's holy cause. And many heathens
suffered his might, unable to rise
and speak of the prowess of Uriah.

As Joab's hand-picked, battle-wisest veteran,
Uriah thought himself a fortunate man.
Born poor, his soldiering provided much
of comfort's touch-- soft linen, lamb and wine,
a house for his new wife, well-shaded
by the king's lavish abode.

His mind was peaceful knowing his wife
was sheltered by more than tent flaps protecting
her bed. But the campaign for Rabbah was not
faring well. David was needed at the front
to command his troops, to sing and play his songs
of inspiration to them. Yet he idled in Jerusalem.

Israel was stymied outside Rabbah's wall
when David summoned the Hittite
who hastened to his ruler, always ready to obey.
After he reported, David gave him leave,
aimed him toward pleasure, primed him with meat.
But the perfect plot was wasted on Uriah
who joined the kitchen servants for the night
beside the king's back door.

When David heard, he tried again to plant
the vineyard with the owner's seed. Once more
Uriah failed to cover up the deed. "I cannot
indulge my flesh while comrades suffer in the field,"
he cried. Then with the wintry will of kings, David
called for seal and quill. Exquisite feel for irony
and punishment composed the message to Joab
at the front to have Uriah lead the charge at Rabbah.

Harpist's hands, herder's hands, warrior's hands
with newly learned regality, placed the plan
for execution in the soon-to-be executed's hands.
And David watched him go as he began the ritual
of rationale: Uriah chose to spurn his opportunity.
Now the army must advance. All obstacles to Israel
must fall. Uriah knew the risks of his profession.

King David sighed. Lately, he wearied of war.
Soon-- there would be a wedding to prepare for.