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Peter and John, Shortly after Dawn

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Peter and John, Shortly after Dawn

But they had seen him lose, like everyone else;
Seen the wisdom and courage drain out of him in the end onto spikes
and wood, just like the ones beside him.
Others he saved. Himself?
It was what they had expected.
So why does she intrude upon their proper grief with indecent stories?
Has she no respect for the dead?
And the town is dangerous for them now.
Still. Still.

The panting run through the watchful streets,
The stooping and entering (one hesitating for fear of ghosts)
In, into the borrowed tomb,
suddenly cool and echoing and twilit after the flat morning heat;
The catching of breath,
The groping for the winding sheet, bodiless;
The reeling from the pungency of myrrh and aloes scattered
violently, joyfully, a cockcrow ago.
Then the realization: He was here.
The heat of him lingers in the charged and burdened air.
But he is gone, and this is now a useless place, a foolish place,
A place for laughing.

What did they do then, these new believers,
his burial clothes dropping forgotten from their astonished hands?
Did they fall to their knees groaning,
souls suddenly awash with the enormity of their belief?
Did they shuffle their feet and look away,
reluctant to gloat at Death's defeat, abrupt and all unlooked for?
Or did they throw back their heads
And laugh aloud at their friend's victory
And boom hosannas at the impotent walls
until the vacant tomb trembled with embarrassment?

—Tim Slover