

# Poems by Charles Black

Selected by David Black

## LOKI RETURNS OR REMAINS

Lurking winterspoilt Loki,  
Revenant or remnant after Christmas,  
Insinuates concerning a rose,

And this is no more than just,  
For Asgard in general fire  
Blazed up on Christmas morning,

Hammerhandle and all. Immortal  
Steel must become immortal rust,  
And only Loki, insinuating

Extinction of a wild rose,  
Hangs about in front of the A. & P.,  
Kicking soft leaves with sardine-colored feet.

## AN EXERCISE IN MATERIAL IMPLICATION

I knew a man who ate something fried.  
He died.

Another man ate chicken stew;  
He died too.

The fellow who takes exercise  
Dies.

I knew a case, and if you think I lie  
You'll die.

## KING TACITUT

King Tacitut, who antedated Moses,  
Is never seen in more than two set poses.  
Up from the Delta to the Cataract,  
Tacitut was the name, and that's a fact.

He ate alone. (To mention it was treason.)  
His annual bath brought on the planting season.  
He donned a set of whiskers when desirous  
Of playing, to his Isis-queen, Osiris.

No whit cared he for obvious defects  
In his administration. Architects  
Would sit for days in this receiving-room,  
Discussing the appointments of his tomb.

Rain was a travelers tale. The sun would keep  
Shining, and when it set he went to sleep.  
He never walked; to get his legs apart  
Baffled contemporary sculptors' art.

One of those nasty medieval winters  
They fed his mummy to the fire in splinters.

## THE END OF POLITICS

My tour of Washington, physical place,  
Wholly convinced my mind that all of this  
Will vanish, for any stone on any stone  
Will be unset, every building must fall down.

Jerusalem is one holiness over clans.  
Rome throws an arch to span all citizens.  
We must not palter, our debates concern  
What shall be left when everything is gone.

## THE MAN BY THE CELLAR DOOR

They call me the super,  
Propped at this cellar door,  
In a detachable-collar shirt  
With the collar detached.

Folded, it steadies  
 A table leg, but I  
 Cannot bring my legs even,  
 I am with whiskey drunken.

They have stricken my name  
 Down at the Heraldic College  
 On their rule that no gentleman  
 Ever needs a shave.

My furnace is out,  
 I am a hundred years old.  
 For my numerous small crimes  
 I am slack in suing pardon.

#### THE OTHER SIDE

To the magistracy of waters  
 Icarus: "Your judgment  
 Is altogether just,  
 Being altogether of yourself.

But you saw only what you saw,  
 The faltering outside moment,  
 The fluttering fall.  
 I would do it again."

#### MINOR MASTER

Palicaducci kept the most of magic  
 In a trunk at home. He travelled on the train  
 Reading, impervious to hints of tragic  
 Histories in women's faces. Once, his brain  
 Project hóuris, but the sweating drummer  
 Took Tums and swallowed. Never one to meet  
 Or part, our hero spent the rest of summer  
 On ice, disgusted, past an asphalt street.

Locution bothered him. The Grail of Fury  
 Would fill, and that was it. He held his luck,  
 Scarcely in bowing distance of a jury.  
 His friends were few. They pestered him to chuck  
 The whole damned show. Suspenders never fit him;  
 He lived and lived and lived, till serpents bit him.

## SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION

On a park bench, for reading without glare,  
I try to hurry a cloud toward the sun.

At the beach, desiring a tan,  
I wish the cloud to move quickly away.

Discriminable difference in my attitude;  
None in the clouds. I call this **Black's Effect**.