

MegaEverything

Generals gathered in their masses
Just like witches at black masses
Evil minds that plot destruction
Sorcerer of death's construction
—Black Sabbath, “War Pigs”

The kid with stringy, blond hair
and torn MEGADEATH T-shirt
plagiarized song lyrics for his poem.
Black Sabbath? I asked. In my tiny office,
he idly kicked the metal desk, not meeting
my eyes. But then, he never did.

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1972, Michigan State Fairgrounds.
Black Sabbath ripped through the sharp
muffle of “Paranoid” on the distant stage
while I guzzled malt liquor from quart bottles
on a gloomy Saturday afternoon.

Ozzie stalking onstage scared the shit
out of me in a familiar Detroit way—
like a biker gang crashing a high school party—
so I could smirk the shiver from my spine
and raise my fist in the air.

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He told me turning in the lyrics was a test,
but would go no further. Had I passed?
Those lyrics, the only semi-coherent thing
he'd turned in all term.

He could've fooled me with *Megadeath* lyrics.
Perhaps he had. We agreed that he should

drop the class. He hesitated at the door,
like there might be one more thing.

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Sixteen. My ears buzzed
with dark-star feedback—
barking dogs, bloody teeth, fragments
of a thorough ass-kicking.

Ozzie's wire-cutter voice asked
what happened when we died
and where exactly was the soul.
The bitter mascara of the unrepentant
and the flawed jewel of self-absorption.
A thunderstorm erupted
but no one fled to the grandstands.

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Poetry was all I had that wasn't toxic.
I should've been easier on the kid.
His name was Chris. He slumped away,
black boots clumping the floor,
and I never saw him again.

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Ozzie's damaged beyond coherence
And yet kids like Chris memorize old lyrics.

Ozzie hadn't bitten the head off a bat
back in '72. He only had to do it once.
The rest of us, Chris, we think about it
every day, under the black incoherent moon.