

# THE ABBOT

by **Richard E. Getty**

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The great abbot is dead and  
 his tunic is buried,  
     along with  
 his white beard  
 which caught crumbs  
 and stiffened in winter.

His heart broke often before he died,

so deeply touched was he  
 by God's piercing arrows.

But this breaking  
 did not bring his death  
 nor the burial of his beard,  
 the beard that he stroked passively  
 while reciting David's psalms.

He died of the desire for heaven.

The beard, it  
 grew from the eve of his  
 solemn profession,  
 and long took its combing.  
 It created a great lather  
 when washed, and  
 smelled sweetly  
 like November's early harvest,  
 drying in the wind.

His hand will miss the touch of it.