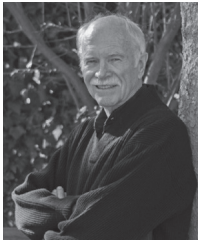


Tom, Tom, What Were You Thinking When

By **J. T. Ledbetter**

you stayed up late with jazz and girls yet ran track at Columbia
 and wrote some poems
 and acted on your vision / painful / you were you, Tom
 and found your way into churches and Hopkins and Van Doren
 and thrust yes (thrust) your way into thinking and praying and wanting Catholic
 on your T shirt –
 surely you didn't foresee a monk's robe
 tell me you hadn't got that far with your hubris and devotion and scared stiff need
 for glory in the capital G for your sins / those you remember / those you knew you
 might repeat and those of mankind for whom you would and did pray

what in the world made you do the 180 and spin like a top through Harlem
 and NY and JB and JD yet came out fresh and clean after a dip in Monk's Pond
 (the how and why we know something of . . . Tom)
 but we still have trouble believing it was you / the masked monk / the kid who heard
 and saw and listened and read and prayed himself silly until the Church took you in –
 no, that's not right – the great heart of Christ enfolded you / covered your sins and unlocked
 your true nature / self / gave you the gift he gave on the cross and you carried it then and there
 and never looked back – not really – doubts and sorrows and wishes and self got in there
 didn't it, Tom, and you kept on kept on keeping on until you found Christ as a second skin
 that would not could not be sloughed off in summer's heat and winter's cold on the knobs only
 made better
 in the springtime of your heart



J. T. Ledbetter

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what were you thinking when you took the jeep out for a spin and scattered monks
and chickens /
what were you thinking when you grabbed the towel and touched the fan
heaven needs no second thoughts
the flash turned you into the goodness and love and drive and creative fire we all have
want / need / desire like the taste of mountain water and like the smell of a puppy's tummy
or the bare bald head of a baby with that mixture of powder and milk and love –

Oh, Tom, you rascally sainted guy, you
never mind what you were or were not thinking / never mind anything / never mind
because we hear your thoughts and feel your pains and yearn for a cool dip into the ponds
of our minds and souls – let thinking be thinking and feeling be feeling and loving be loving

thanks be to God