

TALES OF THE AMORITES

FOREWORD

I wrote this in 1973 when I was 18. I had this fantasy about how great it would be to live in a commune, with, let's say, a slightly relaxed attitude towards sex, driving licenses and the like. I typed it on my mum's old Olympia SM3 (green model). Rather than OCR the whole thing and correct it, it appears in the original, but I have optimised it for clearer reading.

1973
SALES OF THE AMORITES

PART ONE Constantine on the hill

1

Markus climbed the hill at the top of which was the castle called 'Constantine' where he lived with the others. Being roughly autumn the trestle trees were showering stars and glitter on to the ground in several colours. You could almost see the stripes, and the sky was whitewashed like it had snowed upwards. Two-footed people would scuff up the leaves as if they were part of some book they had got mad with and scattered over the ground. And two wheeled contraptions would be seen to float around from time to time, with people who you saw from time to time, and they would maybe intercept the pages on their way to wherever they were going. So the climate was working itself up for a touch of the flu that usually lasted until at least April.

And she was waiting at the gate for him, looking worried about the butter. Now, this was 'Constantine' and it was on the corner of Esthaesia Street and Carminal Gardens which was the hill. The former was a long street that turned into a hill a bit futher on, and the latter was a road that came steeply off the first one and then flattened out and went nowhere in particular, the blods and the petal department. The blods were where people bought things that they needed from time to time, like things to eat or things to put on or things to enjoy, and the petal department (the P.D.) were what you might call the arch enemies of the Amorites of 'Constantine'. These places you got to by turning left off Carminal Gardens, that is if you were starting off by coming down the hill.

"There's no butter" said Markus.

"No butter!" said April. "Shit!"

You had to ignore the garden really, everyone ignored the garden. Really all that mattered was that they were able to get to the front or back door (they usually used the back door because in the kitchen was food and people preparing it, nothing much

happened just inside the front door). But all the green was overflowing over the walls, like a can of cabbage that's boiling over. There must have been almost every kind of leacherous growth there, from Espelliada Ornamullus to the matted non-flowering variety. Probably because none of them were great flower arrangers, their fingers were most definitely pink. Indoors the only growing things they had were a few plants which they kept in the airing cupboard, needing water only now and then. You could stare through the top windows of the house and see a fair panorame of grey and red stripes with a green pinstripe, finished off by a frame of brownny red ivy that had found the way up. That was if you were looking on the face-down side next to the hill; the other side you'd just see a road, next-door or maybe something interesting happening across the road if you were that way inclined.

Markus went in through the green coloured flaking back door that flashed blue as he registered it needed a fresh coat of paint on it. Inside was Cam, nakedly shelling peas in the corner of the kitchen. Cam never wore clothes indoors, she had this thing about it. Usually she'd be making herself useful doing something or other round the house, she never said much, and tried to keep the fact that she was gone over Nere, who was a less-permanent person, to herself. April closed the door behind her and walked over next to Cam.

"There's no butter" she said, "we'll have to use marg."

Markus walked through the space in the wall to see if he could find someone who wasn't busy just at that time. A lot of the doors were missing, well, missing as far as the house was concerned, but of no sweat to them. They didn't altogether see a purpose in having doors all over the place that needed opening and shutting when all you want to do is go from a to b. Most had just come off their hinges, others had been taken off. Those that were left led into rooms that on drafty days were reasonably draughtless. The leftover doors made good fires in the draughtless rooms, oth-

were used as partitions for people who required the use of partitions, in, say, cases of shyness, tact, or custom (i.e. if you're used to sleeping facing a wall on your right side and there isn't a wall when you sleep on your right side, a partition can be a blessing in disguise if utilised in the capacity of a fake wall).

Lent was in one of the downstairs rooms reading a comic.

"Hi, Lent?" said Markus, leaning slightly over him to see if he could muster a response. Lent turned over a page and continued to read the comic book. "It's good? The comic."

"Yes."

"Uh huh, fine. Good, glad to hear that you are enjoying the comic."

There was a pause in the room with the cotton curtains and the bed with the heavy red cover, the empty fireplace, the strategically placed small patterned rug and the two chairs with matching wear-marks. A pause in which nothing was said and Markus looked at Lent who was looking at the comic.

"Lent, Lent - I have this problem, I wanted to tell...discuss it wi-". Lent looked like he was about to turn over to the next page of the comic, so Markus quickly turned it over for him.

"Thank you" said Lent.

"This problem, you see it's not easy to expl- , I mean it's hard to just tell someone, like that. I haven't told anyone about it yet, I mean you'd be the first, if I did. Well I could, I mean could I? Tell you I mean, about my problem that I haven't told anyone else about? Lent?" There was a further pause. Markus could tell that Lent was very slightly worked up about the story in the comic and was just coming to the end of the page on the right. So Markus turned the page over for him again.

"Thank you."

"I expect you're wondering why I'm asking you this, Lent. I mean there's a lot of other people I could have asked about my problem, but I mean you know so much about things like my problem.

I mean, if ever anything like my problem comes up, it's always you who knows what the answer is, how to deal with the problem. It's not because you're the only one downstairs, apart from Cam and April that is, not because of that. I mean I suppose I could have asked them about it, don't think I find it hard to talk to them or anything like that because I don't, but it was just you that I had to ask about it, you do see that, don't you?"

From up the scaley panelled-wide patchy stairway with the bannister of the dragon multicore shimmering light came a voice that called for Lent that sounded like Emma or the loo flushing. Either sound meant relief from such comic diversions as Lent takes his leave from one of the chairs with matching wear-marks and exits left. Markus left holding the comic wondering and generally puzzling.

(Alarum without)

2

Scene Two: A room with the cotton curtains and the bed with the heavy red cover, the empty fireplace, the strategically placed small patterned rug and the two chairs with matching wear-marks. Markus is sitting in one of the chairs with the matching wear-marks, holding a comic and staring at the wall in front of him.

(Enter Arrowitz and Lorne, left)

ARRowitz: Jesus, I stared at the walls of that place all day. You know, I'd rather pack in that place.

LORne: I know. The circles go round so fast they just sweep you under.

(They sit on bed with heavy red cover
I think it's really alienating to be slung in to the way of things, it's not natural, not how things were intended.

ARR: I know what you mean, that's what gets to me.

(Arrowitz removes Lorne's coat and then his own
It would be good if things were rotated round a bit, then it

wouldn't be so engulfing.

(Lorne begins to unbutton her dress

LOR: Yes, I can see that, but you're getting into the circles again, really. But I suppose it would be better.

(Arrowitz begins to undo his shoes

ARR: I sort of worked it all out while I was staring at this wall, it seemed very real at the time, I mean one day I'd be doing one thing, the next day something else and it never got boring.

(Lorne pulls her dress off over her head and puts it down on the back of the other arm chair with the matching wear-marks.

LOR: Eventually you'd run out of things.

ARR: Well, then you'd start on over again.

(Arrowitz takes off his shoes and puts into them his socks. Lorne slips off her shoes.

LOR: But surely things would still get boring, just it would be on a bigger scale - I mean it's these circles, you just can't get away from them.

(Arrowitz undoes his fly, takes off his trousers, and puts them on top of his shoes and socks.

ARR: It would be an improvement though, until something better comes along.

(Lorne removes her bra and wriggles out of her panties and puts them on the bed.

LOR: What about the skilled people, I mean if everyone except them were shifting about being less bored than they were before, the skilled people are going to get uptight and there'd be problems

(Arrowitz undoes his shirt and adds it to his pile

ARR: Well, they just get payed more I suppose. I mean, they must have wanted to get skilled in the first place, so they must like what they're doing and aren't getting bored like the rest.

(He takes off his pants and they get properly on the bed into a position and make love.

Lent came back in and sat down. There was a groan from the bed. Markus noticed he had come in and handed him back his comic. With little apparent interest in it, Lent took back the comic from him and opened it up at random. Markus was miles away, just staring at the wall in front of him. Lent scanned the comic from a distance. There was another bout of heavy breathing from the bed, this time longer than the first. The cloud of apathy hung over the chairs with the matching wear-marks for quite some time, the only sounds in the room being the creaking of the mattress on the bed with the heavy red cover and the occasional moan or unintelligent exhalation, emphatic though they were.

Time, the great network of fate and inevitabilities, churning its incessant chain over and over round the wheels, the great semi-circle where one thing rarely quite fits with another and maybe retards into the distance or makes a sound as it clanks into a fitting or unfitting place. A single reality where most things either are, or appear to be, unreal. A complex where colours have no foundation, however rare their integration. It can be made if other sacrifices are offered, it cannot be moved or quickened or drawn out except within the fathoms of the thinker with a sole intention. Under the great light it shows no flaws, no way out through some loophole, unending, unbeginning. And so, with no time or willingness to spare, it had to be marg. with the peas instead of butter, and marg. on the bread instead of butter.

Cam came into the room carrying two plates, a train of steam issuing forth from each one. She walked round behind Lent's chair and inbetween the two chairs and put down in Markus' lap, her left breast dangling in his face, then gave the other to Lent. She walked out and, a moment later, came back with two plates, both of which had two slices of sliced bread and marg., cut in half from one corner to the other. These she also handed to Markus and Lent.

Markus stared at what had been put in front him; meat in gravy,

mashed potatoes, peas with marg. and a plate of bread and marg. He sat there contemplating it for a few more moments, then he wondered what he was supposed to eat it with. He set the meal on the ~~floor~~ floor and walked out into the kitchen. April and Cam seemed to be doing the next lot, so he went to the draw himself and took out four knives and two forks and closed the draw. He went back to where he'd left his meal and then handed Lent his cutlery.

"I just thought I'd tell you that I don't think I shall tell you my problem after all" he said, sitting down and taking up his meal again. "Thought I'd tell you that. It's a good thing I didn't tell you before I decided I wasn't going to tell you, isn't it? I mean, we'd both have felt a bit bad afterwards, wouldn't we?"

"Uh, huh."

Lent and Markus eat their meal, Markus staring contemplatively at the wall and Lent disinterestedly glancing at the words in the comic. Half way through the meat in gravy with mashed potatoes and peas with marg., Arrowitz and Lorne sat up on the bed as they had when they had first come in, and began to put their clothes on. When they had finished, Lorne went upstairs into the bathroom, and Arrowitz went into the kitchen to see if they were preparing their meal.

"Shall I get the television in here?" said Markus, finishing his meal.

"I don't think it's working" said Lent eventually.

"Oh." Markus carried his plates and cutlery out to the kitchen and set them in the sink. He looked over at Cam, and wondered why, with her attributes and quick availability, she didn't go with many people. Funny. But, he thought, you wouldn't need to talk so much with her, not that you do with the others, but Cam doesn't say hardly anything.

Lorne came in. She asked if her meal was ready.

4

And Synnan? Upstairs. In the 'Land of Forever' in the room

7

next to Tarlin with the record collection. In the castle keep, her. The smell of burnt grass hangs like the consuming dust of ages. They say she's a fraud, existing in forever being an excuse for innaling the intoxications of her intermediaries. Some believe in her, not many, and they too are labelled frauds by the others. Yet Cam is often to be found in her keep, one who puzzles the rest. Her silence keeps others in the unsteady mind that perhaps the bluff is dangerous to call, if indeed bluff? The silken dresses of Synnan hide little in their peacock-beauty, yet Cam hides much in her greater uncovering. Is Nero just a face to bring her into the accepted reality, when it is but a fantasy that shields some fact she keeps locked tight? Would they never know, could she be a lesbian?

They'd gather in there someday, mostdays, in the faith or to share experiences free, unbelieving. In the histories it is told of the Horrens of Arnery Road, who were raided by the petals and not seen for some time. They were used to their fear of the petals, it was something you just had to accept. Even if they came it might not mean the end, but they stayed careful just in case a leak is unintentionally discovered. No-one in the histories had been branded traitor to the code, but you can't be too careful in these matters.

Take that evening. The believers consisted of Synnan, Cam, Erudinas (some friend from God knows where what had come upon their invitation) and Clarence. The people there for a joke were Markus, Tarlin (who didn't stay very long), Lorne, Arrowitz, Petras, Pisces, and Dahl. The orientally inspired flower curtains were shut and they lit joss sticks. Some odd music was heard and Synnan began her spasms, her large nipples clearly visible under the thin dress making patterns as she moved. She'd moan and chant for a while, and that was really as far as it all went. Then she was handed a very large joint by Cam, who must have rolled it, and ceremoniously lit it, takes a few puffs, sits down and passes it on to the next person. That was all she did, her spasms making the

joint all the more effective so she is crashed out after the initial blast. And so they all get stoned, some begin taking off clothes, others start to play with themselves, others go to sleep, some leave, some make love there, some go away somewhere and make love - just depends what happens to turn you on that particular evening.

PART TWO

Car

1

Questions, from time to time, are asked at Constantine. They are never usually expressed with any amount of emphasis but with a kind of roused indifference. So if, say, a person or persons is or are not seen for sometime, somebody, who may or may not have the need to see or feel the person or persons, may ask another person who is likely to know where the person or persons is or are where in fact they have gone.

It had ceased to be dry and through the ivy windows it was easy to see that grey sheets were folding over all over the district. The sort of time when you can't take your mind off other people because you are stuck indoors with them, relief walks being uncomfortable. So Dahl, an emotional fellow, was lying in bed this particular morning with this question rolling about in his head. 'What's happened with Hiros?', 'What's happened with Hiros?'. Next to him, Alice was yawning and still very bleary eyed. She forced herself up and looked down at Danl, who was lying with his hands on the back of his head on top of a pillow. 'What's happened with Hiros?', 'What's happened with Hiros?'. Alice brushed the fair hair out of his eyes and slowly bent down to kiss him. Her jet black hair cascaded over their faces. Then he pushed her away. She was disturbing his train of thought. Alice gave him a fiery look and thrust her knee between his legs. He doubled up in pain, staring with red eyes at the wall as she climbed over him and went over to her clothes. He tried to calm himself by counting to ten

and hoping she'd be gone. 'What's happened with Hiros?'

She'd gone. He got out of bed and walked into the bathroom, swished some water over his face, and dried it on the towel. God and he had to work. He wandered out of the bathroom, and poked his head into Tarlin's room, on the way to the room his clothes were in. They were all awake in there, Tarlin over on his single bed in the corner behind a door on his own, and Clarence and Pisces on the large four-poster. Already Tarlin had put a record on, it sounded like some Afro-space blues. God knows, he had some rubbish in his collection, but some of it was okay.

"Got the time?" he asked to no-one in particular. Clarence leant over Pisces and looked at Tarlin's watch which was on the side-table.

"Nine, well eight-thirty in fact" said Clarence, returning to the warmth.

"Oh, thanks. Got to work. It's just a drag, that's all." said Dahl. "Oh, and what's happened with Hiros?"

"He went Thursday to find a car" came voice from behind door.

Dahl closed the door and walked to the space into his room. Car? Find a car? He went over to his clothes. A car. He got into his pants and a pair of green cord flare trousers. Long time since we had a car. He put on a plain check shirt and then sat down. Did we ever have one? Then a pair of white socks and brown shoes with an engraved design. Hiros is finding a car. Finally a navy blue jacket. Thursday was almost a week ago. He went out of the room, along the landing and down the stairs.

2

Alice was ~~xx the kitchen~~ eating her porridge when Dahl entered the kitchen, and when she saw him she took her plate and transferred her and it to one of the chairs with matching wear-marks in the room with the heavy red covered bed. To see her made him feel red, so he was glad she had moved. He sat down at the

kitchen table and tossed the word 'car' round in his mind. Ha! One to us if he gets it, he thought, the petals have cars.

Cam was the only other person in the kitchen at the time, and she silently dished him out a helping of porridge on which he poured himself some milk and added sugar. He had to be at work by ten past nine, and according to Tarlin's watch, it should now be about twenty to. Most of the other people who worked had gone by now, all except Lorne who was somewhere. She, the tall sisterly big-lipped blonde, who somehow managed to get one of the more select jobs of the commune. In fact, he suspected that Lorne was staying at some other wayward establishment for this period of time. No great loss, he thought, taking in a hot mouthfull of porridge, it was hard to get in the mood for being with Lorne. Good porridge. But last time he congratulated Cam on her cooking, she remained unaffected, unchanged. It wasn't worth it.

Clarence was next on the scene, and he zonked into the chair opposite to Dahl with a piece of paper in his hand. He looked quite amazingly awake, even for him.

"Hey, Dahl, it's crazy. What that Pisces does to me, and that four poster with her and Tarlin's crazy muzak, Christ. I had to write a poem, last night. I-"

"I'm sorry Clarence, much as I'd like to hear about your poem, I have to work now."

"But it'll only tak-"

"Sorry, look me up when I get back this afternoon, okay?"

Clarence was a lucky bugger. In his official capacity of Constantine poetry composer and artist and extrovert, he wasn't bugged about not working. He sat about all day waiting for inspiration, doing some personal project, or doing nothing. He did less than his fair share of work with the girls who didn't go to work, and would often only appear when there was food going because of his 'inspirational trips' that never usually took him further than the local green jungle plain areas. And he was an eater. His week's

eating bill could often easily cover a worker's wage packet. They had to cut his food quota down often, although he never seemed to get any fatter. He raised the piece of paper to his eyes:

Elevatedrip,

Touch'd of late

Exempted, overridden

Open windows, sing me

After you

My wooded eyebrow

Parchment paper senses

-- ex-you, me

and he who sings to me

prevents some other

from the sight and sound

Of which the sight is not of him

But in you

With your dandelion smile.

He was pleased with that poem, he knew he was pleased because he could still see all the pictures that went with that poem when he wrote it. Elevate, he rises till the drip is squeezed out and falls, splatters on the ground as Touch'd is heard. Then a fast train with the words Exempted, overridden (Alice came in with her empty plate, found that as Dahl had gone she couldn't glare at him, and went out again), then looking through the window of the train, on a hill a man sings out. After you - with Pisces in bed. Still with her, in my mind I still see the man singing on the hill, due to that some other mind that wants to see him cannot because I am. But he is just the sound, the sight, the reality is her and her dandelion smile. Ah, yes!

Clarence noticed that a bowl of the porridge had been put in front of him, so, not quite all of him there, he began to eat it, forgetting the milk and sugar.

On his way to work in the pouring rain, Dahl met Markus who was going the other way, along Carminal Gardens.

"Oh, hi Dahl" said Markus. "You going to work?"

"Yes."

"I'll come with you." They started off again in the direction that Dahl had been going. "You work at a blod, don't you?"

"Yes, the one that sells floor cleaners."

"Oh." They found a gap through the line~~x~~ of paint speckled metal, crossed the road, and arrived on the other side of the mirror road through a larger gap.

"Where've you been" said Dahl to continue the conversation.

"Er, getting butter." Markus fished in his pocket and came out with an irregularly shaped wet yellow object. "It's a bit wet" he observed.

They turned left down a road that edged on the petal department HQ, and that also led to the line of blods.

"Dahl," said Markus, "I have this, oh how would you say it, er- problem, and-"

"Did you know about the car?"

"Eh?"

"The car."

"Yes?"

"Did you know about it?"

"No, sorry - but this problem, you see, I wouldn't tell ju-"

"Hiros is getting a car. I wondered where he had got to."

"Oh, real-"

"Tarlin told me, I didn't know until today."

"I see. I have this problem, yes. And I want to te-"

"Went last Thursday apparently."

They turned the corner into a buzzing place where none of them liked to be but had to because of the jobs. Dahl uttered a parting word to Markus as he entered the shop and closed the door behind

him. Markus was left standing outside thinking why did everyone not take an interest in him. They took an interest in each other, everyone except Cam and she didn't really count to his way of thinking anyway. So why not him as well? He wouldn't get so much depressed about this as exasperated. So he had a problem, not so unusual, everyone has problems. But they have people to tell them to, he didn't. Apart from his problem he was quite OK, he had sex often enough like everyone else, he did his fair share of work, admittedly he was out of work at that particular time, but that wasn't unusual either. He was a bit younger than some of them, but he wasn't the youngest by any means, and ones younger than him got better treatment than him in any case. He supposed it was just one of those things that either he'd get over or they would.

He decided to walk back to Constantine the way he had come with Dahl before he got a lot wetter than he already was, although by now it had become a familiar feeling and he didn't honestly care how wet he got really, as long as he didn't catch anything. That would make things even worse for him. Anyway, the butter was seeping slowly but surely into his pocket and he'd get slaughtered if he didn't come back with the butter for their dinner bread this time.

4

By a quarter past two the blitz had stopped. In fact it was golden coming down now, bright, happy for most. Half an hour later the sky had somehow decided to clear blue, which for autumn in a mirrored land was very laudable. There's kind of an air of expectancy that surrounds things when it clears up, and there was this time. At Constantine everyone was feeling jumpy, even Cam was looking out of the window with an air of mischievousness as she was washing butter and other dinnertime things off the plates in the sink in the kitchen. Half an hour of people nattering around the house later, there was a distant noise heard if you were at the front of the house at the time. Clarence and April were

sitting in the two chairs with the matching wear-marks in the front room when they perceived the distant sound. April got up and went over to the window when she heard it, and Cam and Synnan came from downstairs into the front room to stand with her. It wasn't a particularly unusual sound, but due to the mood they were in, they expected to see something weird and wonderful to soon appear outside. As the noise became louder, Clarence, not at first wanting to show their girlish enthusiasm, got up out of his chair as well, and went out to stand on the door step in front of the front door.

An army, the revolution? At last. Or a unique element formed due to a freak of nature when the weather changed so dramatically? A sentinel, come to tell them that they were the Chosen ones to begin a crusade that aeons would never see the end of? A band of Seminites, Orila's, Entiverns? A collection of homeless friends searching for help and salvation? A wondrous machine that would solve all their problems, solve everyone's problems, make meals, wash dishes? God, the mind boggles.

Heros screeched the car to a halt outside the castle, almost bowling over Clarence in the process. The others were outside now, and they all stood staring at the car with their mouths open, all trying to decide whether they were dissapointed, relieved or exited now they knew what the noise had been. Certainly it wasn't a bad car for the money that Heros had taken out of the funds for it and his 'expenses'. It was a pretty ancient light blue volvo with seats that had once been white but were now slightly yellow-faded. There seemed to be a lot of people-room in it; that is, enough for their purposes, and the boot looked like it could take the possessions of the entire household at any one time. Still, there they were, the sudden autumn transformation and noise controversy adding a red tint to their complexions.

Then they all piled into the car and said hello to Hiros who put the machine into first and screeched round the corner and down Carminal Gardens so they could audibly let the P.D. know that

now they had a car.

5

Dahl arrived back at Constantine at three minutes to six, bringing with him the usual working-man's shroud of apathy, and this short auburn haired girl called Odette who had come into the shop at twenty eight minutes past five to see him. Nobody was in the kitchen as they went in, so they walked through to the room with the bed with the heavy red cover, and sat down on it, the room also being empty.

"No-one's here" said the short auburn haired girl called Odette.

Half an hour later nobody else had entered the room occupied by the two people, and no noise had been heard for the same amount of time. Dahl had soon discovered that talking to the short auburn haired girl called Odette was about as interesting as talking to Markus, except about two octaves less bearable. So he got rid of her by walking over to sit down in one of the chairs with the matching wear marks, and violently masturbating.

He sat about to regain his energy for a few minutes, then went out to the kitchen and fixed himself a blackcurrant jam sandwich. As he was devouring a glass of milk, having eaten the blackcurrant jam sandwich, he heard the noise of several recognisable voices laughing and shouting outside. He gulped down the remainder of his glass of milk, and went out of the back door and into Carminal Gardens. Coming very slowly up the hill was the front of a vehicle, and behind that was the back of the vehicle being pushed by a noisy collection of Amorites. Cam appeared to be taking great satisfacyion in steering the car, very badly. Amid another bout of shouting she had managed to steer it across to the other side of Carminal Gardens, just as a blue mini containing a couple screeched round the corner. There was a screeching of brakes as the mini turned violently to avoid the car, and it stopped about a snort neck from the tree Dahl was standing next to. The door of

the mini opened and a long haired people in a velvet suit got out and shouted for about three minutes at the quickly silent group across the road. When he had finished he was bright red, and he got back into the mini, reversed, and drove off. Then the shouting and laughing started again , and they managed to get the machine round the corner to park it in front of the castle. They all collapsed against the wall in front of Constantine.

Dahl walked round the corner and sat down on the end of the line of people. He stared at the car for a few minutes, noting the white hub caps and a pool of oil that was being added to by a dripping from somewhere on the bottom of the car. Then he turned to see who he was sitting next to. It was Cam, so he decided to move as her conversation tended to be somewhat hard to get at. So he moved along the line to where the front gate was with jungle life protruding through the holes, and sat down. This time it was Arrowitz who was next to him.

"So this is it" said Dahl. Arrowitz turned slightly just enough to register who was speaking.

"The car?"

"Yes."

"I think it's called Volvo."

"Oh, great." They both looked at the car.

"You were pushing it" said Dahl.

"It ran out of petrol outside the P.D." said Arrowitz.

"Shit!"

"So we pushed it here."

Dahl looked past Arrowitz at Horos, who was explaining something to Alice. When he had caught his attention, he walked over to him. "Hi" said Dahl, "I only found out today where you'd gone Thursday."

"Yeah, I trucked off to extracate this here machine from society with a communal pittance, and, like, here it sits without

gas full stop. And there you go, the story of my life."

"Does it work OK when it's got gas in it" said Arrowitz, who had joined the group just past the P.D., having just finished working at the blod with the pretty front.

"It's just - too much, noisewise. Yeah, it trucks along quite beautifully most of the time." Dahl seriously wondered why he had bothered about Heros, there you go.

6

So it came to one of those chestnut-smelling days when people didn't work and felt free like they could do something dynamic, ecstatic, colourful. Bring themselves together and spark action to alleviate any dreadful rut and get far away from monotony and stagnated prescence of bringing in the essentials. And the weather was grinning seductively at them, so nice and fresh, beckoning activity. Outside a stream flowing with smells, colours and far-away sounds of breathing life, a paralell to paradise, before ignored by tired bodies or lain under grey wet sheets. Now was the time to be, now was the time to do.

Sandwiches looked very inviting, of jam, cheese, tomato, spam, egg and butter, and Cam was making them very early in the morning on that free day. There was also cake; one large one and a smaller one with Synnan's special recipe. And they had a new flask that would carry coffee, and a large plastic container with orange juice in it. They also had about two hundred No.6 and one or two other brands for the fussy ones. All this she took out to the car and set in the boot along with one or two groundsheets to the sound of feathered creatures of the air who were making moog noises in the trees of their private jungle.

Tarlin was in the kitchen, into a bowl of crisp flakes and milk, when Cam entered having completed her last journey to the car. He had a comic book open next to him on the table, but he seemed more interested in the dynamics of his cereal than the comic. The others would get up, not that they had exactly planned it, but they knew

that it was going to happen that day, it was present in the early morning air. They should have been tired, almost all the beds had contained two the night before, always did the day before a free day, but tiredness is in the mind, and their minds were not tired then. But at that time Cam felt awkward.

Cam, in the kitchen, remnants of sandwich making, nothing left much to do, him, eating cereal with an open comic book and nobody else there. For Tarlin, Tarlin of the records and bed with a door, had climbed out at one o'clock and walked over naked to his door, opened it and walked into Synnan's palace that had no door. He had then walked over to the smallish bed that Cam slept in, and woke her up without waking Synnan, who was asleep in the other bed by the window. She did not speak, she was dumbfounded. He took back the sheet and climbed in with her. This had not been Nero, the one, this had been Tarlin of the record collection, this had happened, no elastic fantasy. He had made violent love to her, and then he had gone back to his room and she hadn't slept. So, for her it was inexplicably uncomfortable in the kitchen and she went upstairs to rouse the others. Tarlin looked up as she disappeared out of the kitchen and then turned to read his comic book.

Upstairs everyone was semi-awake and smiling, and there was no stuffy bitching or hazy realisations. This realisation was really inwardly filling, so full of senses. Clothes went on, nice faces. Cam was dressed for the second time in the week.

?

A bird in flight, flew - over the trees
Onto the lake, and
Touched by the calmed waters,
Flew off once again to waters new.
A dog, playful with its tail
Scampered to and fro in the bushes
Kicking up the discarded pine needles
And deceiving the trees.

Scattered, they sat around and enjoyed the fresh-smelling grass and the atmosphere of contentedness. Cam was sitting with a few people around the picnic cloth, Clarence was reading his poems to this particular select group. Dahl was sitting under a tall tree with Synnan, who was visually explaining her beliefs and feelings under the gleaming sun. Tarlin was a shining knight astride a tall tree overlooking his realm of Heros pursuing Alice and Pisces, and Arrowitz who was astride a star-enlightened April behind a low bush. Heros had parked the light blue volvo in front of a row of bright green oak trees on the clearing that Cam and the others were occupying.

"My wooded eyebrow

Parchment paper senses..." said Clarence. The strobe-jungle whispered as a breeze tingled. Markus was walking.

April groaned, her blood red nails reflecting the sun in the undiscovered kingdom of Tarlin The First. It was his problem, you see, he was walking alone to tell himself his problem.

"You see" said Synnan "the light, what it means to people."

"Yes."

"That is why people worship, worship the light. But they never admit to it now, they give it deceiving names."

"Like god?"

"Yes."

"But why worship anything, why be a slave?"

"Why live? You see, they fear the dark, they don't realise that darkness is as much light as light itself."

The leashed breeze ruffled the leaves on the ground and the leaves on the trees as Pisces scuffed them, flitting in bare feet and giggling with fresh breath. Some had come on old bikes because they couldn't have all fitted into the light blue volvo that was parked in front of the row of bright green oak trees.

Time to eat the sandwiches, so regretfully Clarence sat down and shouted to the others who bounced over to Cam and sat down. And Markus was walking.

PART THREE Nicol and the Painted Box
by Clarence

1

Scene 1 - Constantine on the hill

Enter Nicol, right

NICOL: Far have I come to this fair land
By this, a typ'd adress which bears
The name of 'Constantine', which,
The message reads is bas'd upon a hill.
My arm is heavy with the burden
Of, in one hand, my belongings
And i' the other my painted box.
Lost am I if this is not the place
For so far have I travelled that
My weary legs will no more bear me on.
Yet wait-a mo! If indeed this is the place
Can I be sure of rest within?
Perhaps my coming will not afford
A kind reception, whether or no
I am a stranger come so far?
But let these fears be soon allayed
As I now go to meet proposed sanctuary
Within this castle Constantine.

Scene 2 - The porch and hall of Constantine

Petras answers door

PETRAS: I hear a knock upon the door
Which, by the people we have come to know
Is not a usual thing by any means
To knock, where others enter by the back
Could only be a stranger or a foe
But whosoever it could be, will out

And so I go to answer it.

Opens door

My soul, the very light of love
Now stands ~~now~~ before me, tired she is.
Enter please.

NICOL: Oh, I have not explain'd
That I am Nicol, come of this report
Adressed Constantine, upon a hill.

PETRAS: Well here you are and here you stay
Until such a time as you are fit
Or longer if you wish it so.
But tell me Nicol, what is that
That beneath your arm you bear?

NICOL: Ah, the one thing I cannot reveal
I pray you do not question further
For there is but one soul here
Its contents can I impart.

PETRAS: Fear not fair one, I trust your face
That painted box your secret safe
Now let me take your load from you
That you may rest awhile in here
To ~~wake~~ refreshed of the day
And meet perhaps your bed-mate
For the loving night ahead.

NICOL: I thank you for your kindness
And respect for my journey'd secret,
But I would not wish to sleep
So readily with one I do not know.

Enter Cam and Alice

ALICE: My dear, although I know you not
I see it in your eyes that you are weary
And in need of food to blush your cheeks.

PETRAS: No, I think Nicol requires some rest

CAM: I shall prepare a bed.

All Exit

Scene 3 - The room with the bed with the heavy red
cover etc.

Enter Nicol and Petras. Cam is preparing the bed
with the heavy red cover, and Markus is sitting in one of the
chairs with the matching wear-marks. Nicol places the painted box
on a table which is between the chairs with the matching wear-
marks.

MARKUS: (aside) Who is this that enters here?

Her face is unfamiliar to mine, but

Here they come and go, perhaps I know her yet.

PETRAS: Your bed is here, Nicol, your waking
Shall be greeted by a meal for queens
And then perhaps you'll meet
The one for whom you've search'd.

NICOL: You're very kind in keeping me
They said I would be welcom'd here.
Who is this that eyes me from a chair,
He would not open of my painted box?

PETRAS: No, Markus has in high regard a secret
Especially for one as fair as you.
Markus, this is Nicol, a guest.

MARKUS: So you have come, the one to trust,
Relieve me of my long endured problem.

NICOL: You?, the one for whom I've searched
To open up the painted box?

MARKUS: Though indeed I doubt it very much,
If my secret does lie within the box
Then you are the one to rid me of my burden.

NICOL: But the very nature of the one I seek
Does not suit your passive complexion;
They told me that the one I sought
Was of the sex that I was born.

MARKUS: In that case I am not the one

But even if you're true on this
The contents open'd of the box
May tell us of the one you seek
And hasten on your task ahead.

NICOL: I cannot, for I must be sure.

MARKUS: Yet cure for problems of the one you seek
May be the answer also to my problem
Thereby killing two birds with one stone.

NICOL: The task was thus entrusted to me
By my friends whom I am bound to keep
This secret of the contents of the box
Of which e'n I am blindfold to.
And must I keep it until only when
I'm sure of who I give it to
For whatsoever is within may only last
The once.

MARKUS: Has no-one time to hear me out
And free me of the bond I have?
To be a different heart I yearn
Oblivious to my state of mind.

Exit Markus

PETRAS: Ignore him as he ignores our boredom
Of his incessant ramblings every day.

NICOL: But he needs help!

PETRAS: Bah!

NICOL: Help indeed!

PETRAS: Help to be escorted to the lunny place
To pour his troubles to those people
Better equipped to deal with such as he.

NICOL: But do you never hear him out?

PETRAS: For days on end, though never to the point
His ramblings are of fantasies
So conjur'd to infuriate our minds
And further tangle his.

CAM: Your bed is made.

PETRAS: And now must you rest.

Shall I aid you to remove your clothes?

NICOL: I'll treat that as a gesture Petras,
And not with ill intent as meant
For have you all endowed me help.
I need no help with these I wear
As I shall rest still wearing them.

PETRAS: You're different from the others here
And guard a trust by all means that you can
E'n with sympathy for another
Do you not deter your chosen path.
For these reasons I like you much
For your beauty I like you more
And such shall be my distant loves
Until perhaps I draw you closer.

Exit Petras and Cam

Scene 4 - Synnan's room

Synnan is combing her hair in front of the mirror
of her large grotesque dressing table. Cam enters.

SYNNAN: Ah, Cam, the powers that be are dark
'Tis several days now since I liv'd
My living substances are hard to get
The people who I once relied upon
Are taken by the enemy and cast to pits.
From when they will return I cannot tell,
It could be many moons before I hear from them.
But why have you come here to me
So near upon the waking day?
Is it that there's nought to do
For when you come it's always late.

CAM: We have a guest of circumstances odd.

SYNNAN: Odd? In what way odd?

CAM: She brings with her a painted box
The contents being secret in her trust.

SYNNAN: But why does she appear at Constantine,
And where has she appeared from?

CAM: Her origin is clos'd, but for her sex!
She says she seeks a person
To whom only she confides
And reveals the contents of the box.

SYNNAN: Yet linger! Once I help'd a stranger
Different to our ways who passed on
And told of soon returning kindness.
Perhaps, with guidance from the sun
This girl is but a prophet
Bearing that of which he spoke
Returning kindness with a gift.
Cam, you must go down and fetch this girl
That she may have an audience with me
And I discover what's within the box.

CAM: You know for you that I'd do all,
But now the girl is tired and rests
For she has come from far to here.

SYNNAN: Then bring me up the painted box.

CAM: Neither can I bring the painted box
For we are all entrusted with an oath.

SYNNAN: If 'tis willed, 'tis willed,
Such timely things are order'd from above,
But call me when her sleep is up
And I can see the nature of her type
For then I'll know if she is who I think she is.

Exit Cam

Scene 1 - The room with the bed with the heavy red
cover etc.

Nicol awakes

NICOL: I awake with not a soul in sight
My dreams that make me lose my end
But only for the moment, as now
I recollect my purpose in this place.
These kind, that now move elsewhere,
Are strangers to my way of life;
Confuse my feelings and direction.
They live each moment as if one last
Their feelings on the surface face
That inside them I cannot read
As if there's nothing there at all.
These aren't my kind of people,
And though 'twas in my mind to linger
I shall merely carry out my aim
And see the ends thereof for them
To make my weary path to home.
But soft, a person enters.

Enter Cam

Ah, my dear, my food.

CAM: I hope you like it,
And must I tell you of the one you seek,
She lives above, her birthname Synnan,
And she wishes you to see her anon.

NICOL: I thank you thus for finding her,
And shall I see her when I have eaten
Of this food you have so given.

Exit Cam

And so the one I seek is near at hand
And now perhaps I may soon return

To the land from where I came
Which shall relieve me of my alienity.

Scene 2 - Synnan's room

Synnan is talking with Tarlin, and as she sees the stranger she ushers him out and smiles to greet Nicol. Tarlin sends Nicol a black look for disturbing his talk as he passes her in the doorway.

SYNNAN: My dear, come into the Land of Forever
And take a seat upon my cumfy chair.

NICOL: Like the others you're very kind
Perhaps you are the one I seek,
But first I must be sure of you
By some means there has to be a way.

SYNNAN: There is indeed, and do I know it.
A time once was when to my Land
There came a stranger called Erudinas
To whom I gave a bed and other things
Until he chose to leave, upon which
He promised to return my kindness
And here perhaps he has, but with a gift.

NICOL: You indeed must be the one! Erudinas,
The very same who to me did this box,
Design'd in paint, extend for you.
No name of its object did he give
But now I know that you must be her.

SYNNAN: A gift I did ne'r expect at all,
And now I hold the painted box
The contents I know nothing of
But I am sure he has chosen well
So, filled with life, I go to open it.

NICOL: I have the ~~key~~ to fit the lock.

Synnan opens box.

SYNNAN: Forever! What is this within the box,
Could it be the substance of life
Of which I dyed without of late?
Indeed!, my nose does comply my judgement
And make me glad his choice is good
I thank you all for bearing of this
So far from dear Erudinas of fiery heart.

NICOL: All thanks to him, I love him too.

(aside) But can this all be so of him,
This gift is of no judgement's value
To give her the one devil thing
That wracks her mind from reality
And deceives her vibrant ~~mind~~^{thoughts}
But must I not be hasty in my mind
To put him down for thinking thus,
And must I wait until the result
To form my conclusions from his aim.
Perhaps the evil smelling substance
Contains such particles of goodness
As yet unknown to this poor child.

SYNNAN: And now, my dear, we must rejoice
In sharing of this gift from him
With all who do so take of it.

NICOL: I fear that I do not partake
But do not let me prevent you;
I wish to carry back the news
Of your adventures with your friends.

SYNNAN: That news makes me sad at heart
That one who has come here from far
Cannot participate her goods.
I only hope you gain some joys
From watching us enjoy ourselves.

NICOL: I'm sure I shall (and, panting
Hope for some surprise result.)

Scene 3 - Synnan's room, in the evening.

Almost all the Amorites are gathered in expectancy in front of Synnan as Cam rolls some large joints from the substance in the painted box. Nicol is aside from the others in a corner, watching the occurrences of the evening as they happen.

SYNNAN: And now the time has come to live
For by a friend of far away
I have received a painted box
The contents bringing us our passports
To the forgotten of so long.

NICOL: (Oh, poor souls, they do not know,
What is this 'gift' that I have brought
No better than the devil?
And now they pass around the phallic stick
That takes them yet away from me,
And her, she travels futher than the rest
The one to whom intended has been struck
A plight that makes her mindless of herself
As now she exits from the room,
While others in oblivion of her
Do roll around in nakedness
To play each other as an orchestra.
But I must follow the intended one
To keep her from perhaps a plight
And also find out what airs without).

Scene 4 - The Petal Department H.Q.

The Amorites and Nicol are sitting around in a large, airless, clinical room of the Petal Dep., with a petal of some rank or other looking upon them.

SYNNAN: My friends, I beg you do not bear me hard,
My luck was out when the petals saw me
On ascent of the fire-sticks in the street.

PETRAS: Do not fear.; Forever is safe
It is not you we hold hard hearts
But she who waits in silence over there,
The one who with her bare the painted box
That now the contents are discovered
By our fearsome enemies of the night.

SYNNAN: But she holds no blame!

NICOL: And I say yes,
I should not have trusted those I did,
To bring to you such evil gifts
Without first knowing what they were.

SYNNAN: Evil gifts! You know not what you say,
The gift was of a good intent,
'Twas I that turn'd their purpose evil.
And now, dear stranger, here we are
In sorrow of ourselves this night
That you are, like us, blamed
For the 'crime' that only we are guilty.

NICOL: But I am guilty more of this,
For was it not I who caused this pain
By giving you the painted box
That kept the substance of your wishing.

MARKUS: 'Tis best you all be silent
I fear that here the walls have ears
To betray our futher secrets
And put us all in jeopardy of more regret.

PETRAS: For once your words are wise,
The motion seconded.

NICOL: (My soul is tested to the greatest limits
To try and keep my faith in those who sent
That fateful box whiche'n now is tested
By the ones who haunt in their
Corridors of fire. And yet one enters.)

Enter a Petal

PETAL: Our means have been exhausted by the box
To find that it contains our basest substance;
A scented earth we found within,
And by that fate we now can set you free.

AMORS: Ye Gods!! Can this be true,
Our pictures conjured of the very earth
Upon which we stand?

SYNNAN: Forever!, now I see
The secret of the box was life itself
A heap of disguised earth, of scent
To deceive us as we have been all along,
And now I know the secret lies in us
And all the earth and living things around us,
Not in such false substances we knew before,
There is no need for them when, by our minds,
The secret of the life doth lie!

NICOL: My friends did not betray me!
The painted box was good intended
And has given them the true secret
To live as free as they were before
But bonded by the substance instead of free!
This day has made me happy
To see the faces of these chang'd people
Who now at last have seen the light.
My mission done., I now can go from whence I came.

SYNNAN: Farewell, kind girl, I shall be grateful
To your people until eternity does
Bring us together in the land of Eprever.

AMOR: Farewell!!

NICOL: Farewell, and soon I hope we'll
Meet again to live in safety of our secret
That now we all do share.

THE END

Song was in the middle of a large field of long lazy grass. You see, Tarlin was a drummer. And they were listening to song with their bare feet playing with the barley-like heads of the grass, the field like a shimmering plane of light. You couldn't touch the plane, you could only reflect upon the tiny part you had within reach. And the drums were indeed sounding out and well, and they were happy with song in their field of shimmering light. The flight all around seemed attentive, and with a cymbal crash the news was carried further by a sudden scattering in the air. Somehow the stagnant hum added eternity to song for the moment, then in the lull amplified the endless sound waves that would never die.

And at the far end of the large field of shimmering light a dog stood erect and motionless with its eyes puzzling at the strange band song that was little more than just an effect, though by its fantastic affinity, apparent. The owner, an old man, ancient in his laziness, walked under the summer up to the dog and, seeing its unusual attention, turned on the well-worn path at the end of the field and looked across to see what the dog was seeing. But his eyesight was poor from so many years of his life and he was unable to see what the dog was seeing. He scolded the dog for seeing the nothing he could not see, and then, as if the air had suddenly cleared for his benefit, he heard song as a wave of summer breeze stroked the grey hairs on his head. He felt sorry for blaming his own malfunctions on the alert dog, and then he no longer remembered the dog or his bondage body, and though he could not see, he saw his childhood and he felt young. He saw a stick lying among the tall grass, snatched it up and flung it towards the sound for the dog to fetch. He tried to forget the pain he suffered from as he strode the grass after the dog.

They had come by two trips in the light blue volvo along with Tarlin's drums and friends, a girl with a voice called Frescia,

a gay called Simon with an accoustic twelve-string and another called something with a flute that sang. They hadn't known where they were going, but when they found the field of the shimmering light they knew they were there. Tarlin sort of sprung it upon the Amorites that they were coming, just that morning, so they all took the day off work and Tarlin dug out his drum kit and his friends and put them all in the car. Now, his drums were one of his well kept secrets although they all knew he had them. He never mentioned them and he never seemed to practice them, but he had them and he was good. Well, kit - not really a kit, more an collection of this and that. He had some skin drums that were ~~xxx~~ various and half painted black, he had tarnished cymbals, bells, and a tamborine on a hi-hat stand. He had a little hat that looked big that said 'drummer' on it. He ~~was good at making~~ sticks from bits of wood he was somehow able to find and carve down.

They had also brought a lotsof bottles of lager and lotsof Cam sandwiches, like the time they had gone to the park when Hiro had got the light blue volvo. So they were swigging away and happy as Song danced in the air and Clarence spent five minutes per word on his latest creation, his pen hovering in the air to his will. And Markus was concentratedly seeking out animal and insect life on his own personal plot, capturing them in his cupped hands as a child would. The girls were wearing loose-breast breezy summer frocks with flowers on, and laughing and rolling about in their Greek lace sandals. Cam had decided that on this trip there would be no need for any unnecessary donning of clothes, so she came naked with only a shawl to keep the odd sweep of air from catching her unawares. Actually, Dahl was getting it quite nicely together with Pisces, so he was pretty happy. Clarence was quite sure he caught a glimpse of them flitting naked through the woods at the top of the field. They HAD disappeared together some time before, anyway he wrote a poem on it and forgot all about it. Pisces had previously stopped turning him on and he had found his hand mysteriously wandering elsewhere, so he bore no grudge to Dahl, in

fact he was grateful that all was bright and beautiful in the old 'land of intrigue, domestication and carnal knowledge ltd.'. He was having a wonderful time with Alice, wish you were here sort of thing. The only hangup with Clarence was that they thought he was real stupid being so intelligent, I mean some people are just too intelligent.

The sun began to sink, you don't notice that the sun is going to sink until you notice the thin whiffs of cloud beginning to gather on the horizon, and song becomes a slow blues to mourn the passing day and beckon the yet sleeping night. In the time it takes to fall asleep, the day was gone, and the Amorites were lethargic, many asleep. Tarlin, not apparently tired from his playing, played on, drumming a snare as if the last man left at the end of a fiery battle, the combustion gone as the dead sun, the lands being deprived of light as bodies deprived of life. And now the mysteries of night as the mystery of death as Tarlin got fed up with playing the snare and fell to the ground as somebody clapped and handed him a joint, and a bread roll.

Cam was helping April and Arrowitz to collect sticks and other inflammable matter so that they could build a fire to keep them warm. It was a lot easier to do that than go. Hiro's was putting together the Constantine hubbly bubbly that they usually kept in a suitcase with the plants in the airing cupboard. Maybe Tarlin kept his drums in the airing cupboard?

2

Around one thirty in the morning they were all sitting round the fire drinking special tea and smoking special tobacco through the hubbly bubbly, staring glazedly at Synnan who was into a really erotic dance, the light from the fire spiralling on her body like ripples of coloured water. From the light that danced you could see the discarded instruments a little way off in the field, gathering dew and life spots to increase their maturity. Frescia was quite popular, she was in the middle of a conversation with Hiro's, and

already she had proved to be very magnetic as well as extremely sexually stimulating (in a nice way).

Then they saw stranger. Stranger was some way off, or in the distance. The guy called something with the flute that sang noticed him because he was the sort of person who didn't do much socially, he just played and noticed things in his density of expression. Stranger was approaching the happy group of people. He didn't look dangerous, he didn't look as if he was wont to come this way very often, and he didn't look a parasite either, he just was wearing a pair of blue jeans, a black sweater and a pretty nondescript coat. He went up to the guy called something with the flute that sang because he had noticed that he had noticed him.

"Hi" said the stranger, "I saw the fire so I came over." The guy called something with the flute that sang was not particularly talkative at the best of times, so, the stranger having been noticed by some of the others now, Dahl went over to see what was going on.

"Welcome" said Dahl, "what brings you out here at this time of the night?"

"Well, I live here, y'know?"

"Oh! But where, there's no house for miles."

"There is, yeah, in the woods, there - Marchbancke House, that's where I live."

"What, alone?"

"No, I have friends there, many friends. You see, my pa owns this land, that is, the land you are on and burning a hole in. I came to warn you really, because he has dogs that come out at night hungry for trespassers. He lives away over there, and he gave me this house because he was sick of seeing me around his place."

"Oh, I see. Just a minute, I'll have to let the others know of this. Take a seat."

"Well, look, you can all come back to Marchbancke if you like."

"Hey, that sounds great, I'll tell the others that."

The stranger remained standing and watched Dahl as he went over to where the majority of people were situated. They were enjoying themselves and didn't seem to see a good enough reason to ditch the party and truck off to this guys place who they had never met before. Dahl was quite some time arguing with them, and the stranger was still standing there showing no expression, getting quick stares from the assembly now and then. The discussion became louder and everyone joined into it leaving the stranger and them on either side of the roaring fire.

A few minutes later there was the sound of dogs barking, and the talking stopped abruptly as all eyes turned to where the noise had come from. The stranger turned casually to see the dogs and trainers as twilight dots in the distance, coming in their direction. Then he turned and faced them.

"You'd better come" he said, "I don't think any of you want to be chewed up on a nice evening like this."

And they all got up and put out the fire and collected their things and instruments and followed stranger as he made toward the woods at the end of the field of shimmering light.

3

It was strange, to see the folk of the burned out village following a friendly squire to his castle while the hungry enemy approached nearer by the second, and all this yet in the eerie half-light of early morning. Stranger led the Amorites to the edge of the forest where he told them they were off his father's land and now on his so that they were safe from the marauding animals, who indeed were turned back by the trainers. Then he led them through the thick forest in which there was no apparent path, and pretty hazardous with it. And then they saw Marchbancke.

Marchbancke not a house, nor a castle. Marchbancke was a station, two platforms with a small hut on one of them which had a faded green plate on it reading, not surprisingly, 'Marchbancke'.

In the midst of a forest: And between the two platforms a length of track overgrown and rusty with age that finished with the platform as it had started, coming upon trees at either end.

The stranger turned and faced the Amorites. Bewildered, they looked back at him. Then he spoke.

"Thus far we have come together, and now we must depart. I am sorry to have deceived you, but it was necessary. On your return you shall have no trouble from any kind of animal, the dogs I conjur'd to suit my purposes, a figment of your imaginations. But there is one of you that I must take with me."

They were in a kind of stunned silence, they couldn't ^{find} the words to respond to this.

"Don't worry, the one chosen need have no unnecessary fears for his safety, he would not be chosen if he was not thought suitable. But we must hurry, soon the train shall arrive."

And, without a word, Tarlin walked to the man and they ascended the platform and disappeared.

Darkness, a tunnel perhaps. Certainly Tarlin could see the stranger, and they were still standing on what had appeared to be the platform, though he was not able to actually see it or the trees that had been around. The stranger was staring in the direction a train might come from, assuming they were still on the platform.

"Why, then, am I here" said Tarlin after great deliberation. He knew the stranger had heard him, for he detected a slight twitch of recognition on his part, so he waited.

"The train" said the stranger. A glow seemed to approach from the direction the stranger had been looking in. There was no noise but the glow was becoming brighter.

"Do ^{we} have tickets?" asked Tarlin, saying the only thing he could think of with any relevance to a situation he did not understand.

"Tickets? For a train to nowhere? Hah!" Tarlin left it at that.

They 'boarded' the train, moving on to a part of the blackness and glow that had two seats facing each other. The seats as such seemed to have no substance, yet they provided rest for the body.

"You are here," said the stranger, answering the question Tarlin had asked some time before "because you have to return a part of your world that was accidentally taken away, you must re-establish the balance before ill comes of it." The train had not seemed to move, but then, thought Tarlin, it wasn't supposed to because they had no tickets. "Now, you will perhaps wonder why you are in fact needed to come with me on this task." He was, in fact. "Well, from here one can only visit you the once, never again to return, and only then if one is the chosen from this world, as you are the chosen from the other, you follow?" Tarlin nodded. "You see, some time ago, a man, a chosen one, was selected for, as it were, a reconnaissance to your world, to keep tabs you might say. But he made the mistake of bringing back with him a certain

porcelain figurine from a place where he was given shelter a night without realising that this just could not be done under any circumstances, as now you must not return from our mission with any matter from this world. The figurine has not yet been located as only the chosen can be told of this and few of us exist at any one time. It may not be us to find it, but the chances are that we shall, for we have two completely different minds from our varied worlds and between us we should find the answers. I could not possibly go into the logic involved in your selection as a chosen one from your world as they are far too complex for you to understand, just as your railways are difficult for us to grasp."

Tarlin somehow understood something of what the stranger had said, enough anyway to know that to get out of this place, and he was pretty sure he wanted to, he had to help the stranger locate this strangely dynamic figurine. "So what was Marchebanke?" said Tarlin.

"Marchebanke is a bridging point between your world and ours. The fact that in our world it is a 'station' and yours part of a forest--"

"But in our world it appeared to be a station also."

"Ah, another illusion I'm afraid, to satisfy their curiosity. When we had left it disappeared, along with the 'dogs' I mentioned."

"Why did you involve the others then, if it was only me you wanted?"

"I had to gain both yours and their trust, because I would not have got you away without some consternation on their part. Don't worry, they will remember nothing to upset the balance, and they shall not miss you, for what will seem like a week here to you, is barely an hour in your world."

"Living as we do, I doubt if I would be missed anyway, not for a while at least."

"A reason perhaps why you were chosen, and another is your

artistic temperament."

"Oh? How do you know?"

"It's obvious, in our world there is little opportunity for expression. In even a short time on your world I have learnt many traits that are unattainable here. It's because artistic qualities promote the open-mindedness required on such a mission as this."

"Then why was not Clarence chosen?"

"Clarence?"

"Oh, sorry, Clatence is our poet."

"Ah, poets have much to learn that musicians can teach. Poetry in one language is Greek to another, translated it loses its verse and meaning, and read it can only be understood by the writer. Music is universal. I heard song and I knew you were the one."

Tarlin felt quite pleased with himself, to be a 'chosen one' had begun to impress him, to think that he, one from so many, was chosen. That is, assuming this guy was straight, still whether he was or not didn't seem to change the situation he was in. He had to believe him in any case because the stranger was his only chance of getting out of wherever he was in, or out.

"Here" said the stranger. They 'got out' from the train. The familiar glow dissipated as it had come. Before them was a phosphorescent phallic-like object, that glowed continuously from one colour to the next and so on, there seemed to be no pattern to it at all. It was slightly blinding among the darkness, and Tarlin shielded his eyes.

"I'm sorry, I should have warned you" said the stranger, "here our eyes are better developed, we can both distinguish in the dark and polarise in the light."

"Where are we going?"

"Oh, the pursuits office, this object indicates that we have almost reached it."

"Pursuits office?"

"Oh, you'll have to bear with all this, I keep forgetting you're not used to the way things are here. Well, the pursuits office is a kind of equivalent to a missing persons bureau. There are several of them in different places here, in such places that people have to pass through them at certain points in their travels from one zone to another. Then, if they are required, it is known where they can be found."

"But surely, as I see it there is unlimited scope for movement around as there are no boundaries, and therefore people can avoid these pursuits offices."

"No boundaries, you say? Then on what do you tread? Feel over on either side - see? Perhaps they are not visible to you, but there are boundaries to the paths we tread. And there are many paths of no account as those that trod them did never return."

Tarlin nodded. He was learning by the minute that his best bet was to keep his mouth shut and let the stranger get on with it. After they had walked on a way, Tarlin observed a shaft of light coming from ahead. As they came closer to it he could see that the light was coming from a long cylindrical type structure that seemed to stretch far into the distance. Eventually, they entered the structure, which was little more than seven feet in height (or so it seemed, but Tarlin had learned not to believe anything too much), and the stranger led Tarlin to an opening in the left hand wall (well there you are, he thought, a hole in a perfect cylinder should not have been there).

The hole led into a small office in which there was a desk piled high with paper and plastic-looking clip - boards. The only other features of the room were two filing cabinets to the right at the back and a chair behind the desk on which a short man with curious glasses was sitting.

"Err - hum" the stranger cleared his throat. The short man with the curious glasses looked up suddenly as if he had just been kipping.

"Yes?" he said, as if he was long due for a lunch break.

"I wish to locate 72L95P466" said stranger.

"72195P466?"

"Yes."

"Just a minute."

The short man walked over to the filing cabinets and pulled out the bottom draw of the right hand one. He flicked through some papers, found the one he wanted, looked at it and then put it back and closed the draw. Then he opened the other cabinet at the second draw up and flicked through that. Tarlin was beginning to bore, so he took a joint out of his pocket that he had made earlier and lit it. The stranger looked at him strangely for a second then looked away again. Tarlin wondered whether he had learnt to keep his mouth shut also. The short man had found what he was looking for, and sat down again.

"Release" he said.

"Release!" Stranger was jubilant. "I should have known he'd go there, we've got it made! He'll be in there ages!"

"Oh" said Tarlin, "Release then."

They motioned to go, but the short man indicated by snorting that their business with him was yet to be terminated.

"Numbers?" he said.

"Oh, 49343U980" said stranger.

"Yours?" said the short man to Tarlin as he took out a ledger from one of the draws in the desk and wrote in the first number.

"49395U980" said the stranger before Tarlin could speak.

"Oh? Related?"

"Brothers" said Tarlin. The stranger grinned, and they both went out the way they had gone in, leaving the short man of the pursuits office to get on with his paperwork.

Outside, they turned left where there were two sets of stairs. They both looked as if they descended to the same place.

"Those?" said Tarlin, pointing to the right hand set.

"No, they go up" said the stranger. "We're going down."

'Please sit down, relax' said a feminine voice. There was a strong smell of perfume in the place, which was rich in furnishings of a type that Tarlin had never seen before. It was a strange cross between the pitch darkness 'outside' and what they now had before them 'inside'. The stranger seemed quite content to sit down as instructed and he seemed miles away, staring at the buxom wenches that flooded the place. There were several other people in the place on the luxurious seats, most of them men, and most being offered the services they required by the 'staff'.

By now, one of the 'staff' was standing next to Tarlin and putting her voluptuous arms around him. She stared at the stranger.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

Tarlin frowned at the stranger, then looked at the girl who seemed so eager to please. She was tall with flowing blonde hair, wearing a small velvet-looking one piece, her large breasts overflowing from the top of it. Her legs appeared not to be covered by stockings and were a kind of light gold texture, as were her feet which bore no shoes.

"We mustn't stay here" said Tarlin angrily at the drooling stranger.

The girl, seeing that Tarlin was steadfast, wandered over to the stranger and leaned over him. "Are you positive I cannot help you?" she repeated, this time in a more husky voice. The stranger, basically but a man at heart, had not the resistance that Tarlin had due to his wariness of the situation, and pulled the girl on top of him. It took him no time to discover the twin zips on either side of her 'dress' (he'd obviously been to release before) and pulled them down discovering that she wore nothing on underneath. Tarlin couldn't help noticing that she had a magnificent body, her large breasts palpitated beautifully as the stranger wrestled with his clothes and in no time they were quite happily having it away on the couch.

"Er - um" said Tarlin. "Don't you use contraception?" They both

stopped and looked at him.

"There are no births here!" said the stranger disbelievingly. "We do not age here!" Tarlin should have known better.

Some time later the girl derobed herself and the stranger was wearealy putting his clothes back on.

"Finished?" said Tarlin sarcastically.

"Well, I did ask her if she had seen a man carrying a porcelain figurine in here."

"Oh, well done" said Tarlin in the same tone. "Well?"

"No, she hasn't. But she is coming back with something to drink

"Oh n-"

"55932T101, yes I'll remember that, one of the best I've had here."

"We're going" said Tarlin, grabbing the stranger by the hand. He had a feeling that the perfume in the place had somehow affected the stranger's sensibilities and not his, so the sooner out of it the better. There seemed to be somesort of exit at the far end, and he struggled to take the frequently distracted stranger who was waving to all these girls that seemed to know him.

It seemed a way to the 'outside' but when they had entered it they were weightless, as if they were floating in water. But it was different, there'd be hard and easy parts to the solution, different textures that you couldn't touch, but it certainly was very satisfying. But they had to get out. Again the stranger was enjoying every minute, Tarlin had to get them out, his best bet seemed to be to go down to the 'bottom' of wherever they were, if it had one. They glided down to the bottom, or so it seemed, as there was light coming through a square aperture below.

They finally reached it, the stranger first and he swung in with what seemed to be a perfected technique, so Tarlin copied him and managed to stay upright. Again they were in an area of nice furnishings and there was a vague odour about the place.

"Where are we?" asked Tarlin.

The stranger indicated that he would show him. There were less people in this place than there were in the last one and it was far smaller (although huge to the standards he was accustomed to) The room was also divided into varying layers and shapes, all with revolving, ascending and descending, and otherwise moving chairs or couches. The stranger showed Tarlin to one of the couches and they sat down. Between them was an arm of the couch which the stranger turned to. He produced a tube from it and handed it to Tarlin

"Put it to your mouth" said the stranger. Tarlin did this and got one of the biggest kicks he'd ever had.

"Well?"

"Er, gr-eat". He found the words difficult to say, his mouth or body wasn't seeming to respond to his brain. But it was really great, getting blasted with no fuzz or fuss, and in all possible comfort too. He wouldn't have minded one of those chicks right at the minute.

He tried the buttons on the arm of the chair, which he was just about able to do, although his movements were rather spastic-like. The red one raised the couch in the air, then the blue one made it swivel around, and the green one tilted the couch so he and the stranger (who had not indulged in the drug) were facing the ceiling and staring at this strange vibrating design. It was a fantastic sensation, facing this eternal design and going round in circles under the influence.

The stranger was now looking concerned, and he stabbed his fingers on the buttons which made them return to normal again.

"Hey, what a-are yyou . . . doing?" said Tarlin, his mind spinning. The stranger handed him another tube to suck, and Tarlin quickly took it, expecting another wierd effect to come over him.

"An antidote" he said. "Thanks".

"We must continue" said the stranger. "As I said, with two of us the danger is halved."

They walked past all the faraway people who were gesticulating

to their rearranged brain patterns. It rather sickened Tarlin after a while to see the waste around him, although he was the equivalent of them where he came from, though admittedly with hassles that they did not appreciate luckily.

They entered what seemed to be a sub-section of this particular 'department', this one containing considerably older looking people than the previous ones. They were making an incredible row of jeering and singing, sitting on the floors in groups or alone with identical paper cups in their hands. Around the walls were varying erotic films, showing continuously, of love making, homosexuality, lesbianism, Trollism and numerous other practises. There were also several machines around the walls and at different points within the area that dispensed these cups they had containing colourless liquids that Tarkin guessed were of an alcoholic nature, to put it mildly.

Both Tarlin and the stranger had no desire to indulge in the fiesta, not because they didn't need a drink, but because they hated the thought of being associated with the social scene that predominated. They were learning.

"We're approaching the next pursuits office" said the stranger.

"Thank God."

"Yes, it would not have been my wish to bring any sane man on this quest, but there was no alternative as you know."

"No, I'm not blaming you, but I wish to hell we could find him as I'm beginning to get a little homesick."

"As I."

"Yes, I never asked, where are you from?"

"Ah! Far distant, from here anyway. I suppose I'm nearer to your world if anything, say, two universes perhaps."

"Oh. And your world?"

"Hard to describe really, in your terms, perhaps we could go there when our mission has been completed."

"Yes, I think I could take in one more world after this lot,

that is if I can get back to mine with no trouble."

"Of course. We have a gate, otherwise I would not be chosen."

"Ah yes, and who chose you?"

"I cannot say I'm afraid."

"Never mind then, I just asked."

By now they had reached what must have been the end of Release and had once again come out into pitch darkness. Tarlin looked behind him to see what they had left behind but it was pitch dark behind them as well, but for another of those pulsating phallic objects.

"I'm afraid that where we are going next is no better" said the stranger. "If anything, it is worse."

Tarlin was beginning to have doubts about whether he'd get back in one piece, whatever confidence the stranger had bestowed upon him.

THREE

Chance

The sky was grey and open. The torrential rain was pouring down upon the streets of ill repair. And, staring, the houses mourned in their terraced regret. People walked the streets, alone and not wishing to speak and lose their chance to breathe. Several men in uniforms passed now and then, with doom ridden eyes, seeking the unconforming. Some, mad - No sense of direction, no purpose, no chance. And no roads, like a sodden, car-less Newcastle under martial law.

Tarlin had been advised not to speak to anyone, not even the stranger. If he did, the odds were against him that he would ever speak again. For here the rules of life did not apply, only chance. The people were mere pawns in one huge game of monopoly, with seemingly no knights or rooks to govern the progress of the game. Apparently, somewhere along the line something had gone vastly wrong, a mass typing error had determined a life of spent interest. And here they were, two more pawns with no more defense than the

next man. It was quite insane, and what was more insane was that they had no alternative but to accept it and press on for this blasted figurine.

Across the road, amid the sound of the rain, there was the noise of a scuffle going on. Two of the uniformed men were beating hell out of this woman. They forced her down on to the ground so that she was struggling around in the wet and dirt, then they beat her alternately with their truncheons. Tarlin was shocked, he made to cross and help the woman, but the stranger silently grabbed his arm and firmly pulled him back, shaking his head as if to say 'she'll get this anyway' ; 'best you don't risk yourself as well'. So he was forced to watch. Now they had torn off her coat and the filthy water was making her battered body stick to her clothes, then while one of the men held her the other tore her clothes from her leaving her naked to his assault. He took out his knife and began flicking it to her body. He cut off an area of her forehead as she managed to lash out her foot at his chin which stopped him only momentarily and succeeded in getting him riled so that he came at her viciously a second time and cut off one of her breasts. They left her covered in blood with a knife sticking into her crotch. Tarlin was violently sick and collapsed onto the ground.

The stranger, white faced, picked Tarlin up and helped him along until they turned a corner where they stopped. Tarlin knew that he had to pull himself together, there was no stopping now, especially not in a place where barbaric cruelty was rampant. He remembered again and was sick again. The stranger indicated what appeared to be a shop to Tarlin, and they managed to make over to it, both dripping with wet.

Inside, though dour, it was like a normal grocery shop, with the goods arranged around and a counter with an assistant behind it. The only difference was that on the counter, instead of a cash register, there was a large wheel with a red arrow pointing

upwards from below. They went up to the counter.

"Can I help you?" asked the assistant. Tarlin was surprised.

"We speak in shops today?" said the stranger.

"Yes, and chance is fair also. Shall I determine for both of you or just one?"

"You hungry Tarlin?" asked the stranger.

"Er, yes, but--"

"Both."

Tarlin was confused, but he said nothing. He had to trust in the stranger, he seemed to know what he was doing.

The assistant pressed a button behind the counter and the wheel began to build up momentum. It had appeared to be a blank wheel, no marks, no numbers or words, just empty. When it had come to rest again, the man turned to the stranger.

"Yes" he said. "One of you, choose."

"Him" said the stranger.

The man pressed the button and again the wheel spun and came to rest.

"I'm sorry" said the man, "no, just the one." The man disappeared to the back of the shop and came out again with two packages, one being larger than the other. "Which?" he said to Tarlin. There was a silence. Tarlin had gathered that he had, for some reason, to choose one or other of the two packages, so, using his better judgement, he selected the smaller. The man returned the other to where it had been. Tarlin opened up the package and inside was a kind of brown mushy substance that resembled fish paste.

"Your food" said the stranger. "Don't worry, it's OK."

"But what do you eat?"

"I don't, bad chance." The man was eyeing them from behind the counter, he had a slightly worried look on his face.

"Well, we'll share this then" said Tarlin, offering the substance to him.

"No! They'll have me! No trouble, please!" said the man, almost

screaming at them.

"Why" said Tarlin. "Why?"

"You can't here, chance does not permit," said the stranger, "eat, eat while you can."

The man was sobbing over the counter, he didn't notice as two of the uniformed men entered the shop. "Eat . it , yourself" said the man. The door slammed shut. One of the men knocked the untouched food to the floor and pushed Tarlin and the stranger against the wall, the other leaned over the counter and grabbed the man, cracking him on the head with his truncheon as he did so.

"You? You?" said the one holding Tarlin and stranger. The other one found the man senseless and let him fall to the ground behind the counter then went over to help the first.

"He got eat" said the stranger, "I didn't."

One of them pressed Tarlin hard to the wall.

"No . problem" said Tarlin with difficulty. The two in uniform grunted and slung Tarlin and the stranger to the floor. One of them opened the door and they dragged them out. Tarlin managed to get onto his feet and he helped the stranger get on to his.

They were taken for some distance by the men, being continually beaten on the way by their truncheons, almost but not quite to the state of unconsciousness. Eventually they reached a large building that was vaguely newer than the surrounding were, and they were hustled into it and lay exhausted on the floor. They heard a voice say 'strangers?' then 'this way' following a familiar grunt, and were carried along a corridor of echoing screams and groaning. Tarlin blacked out.

FOUR White

He awoke with a splitting headache to the racket of the screams and groans he had blacked out to. He was alone in what looked like some sort of cell, a hole really. It was muddy with silt, and he could only see what was in front of him for the only

light in the cell was that which filtered through the tiny port-hole entrance. A small grotesque animal scuttled across the shaft of light and disappeared into the darkness. Tarlin was sick over himself and his head was going round and round. He couldn't get himself to think straight, let alone co-ordinate any kind of movement. He looked down at himself. His shirt was covered in blood, he couldn't feel anything, he was beyond that. They must have given him the hell of a beating. And the stranger? Was he alive?

He was aware of footsteps amid the bilingual screeching. They were coming his way. A tiny plastic package flew through the hole and landed in his lap. He looked at it. It contained four minute tablets, all white. Food? He pondered it for a few moments and his sense of hunger won over. He laboriously opened the package and one by one dropped the tablets into his mouth and swallowed them. Others must have been doing the same, for the noise had quietened down. Indeed, after a while he found that he was able to move again, and he tried to stand up. He couldn't, the ceiling was too low. He stuck his head out of the hole to see what was to be seen. No men in uniform. He eased the rest of his body through. Then he heard footsteps and disappeared again. The steps stopped at intervals until it reached his. The stranger looked in.

"You're okay!" whispered Tarlin.

"Yes, and you. You must hurry, we have to escape!"

Tarlin quickly shot out and stood up beside the stranger.

"But why do not the others escape?"

"The tablets."

"But - I thought they were food!"

"Yes, but they also eat away at the mind until there is no resistance left."

"Oh God. I took them."

"Oh, it's OK, you'd need a lot more before any harm came."

"How do we get out?"

"There's a small porthole round the corner that leads to the outside, the only means of letting air in to this part of the cells but it is covered by the two guards who patrol this area."

"Then we jump them."

"No, they'd be too strong to knock out, I shall have to try and delay them while you get out then I can follow."

"No, I shall delay them."

"You have to return the figurine, in case I fail it is up to you."

"I-"

"He is in white, I feel sure now if he came this way. Do not worry, when you find him he shall explain."

"Well, I trust you but you must make it."

"Come".

They turned the corner and were confronted by two large men in uniform, behind was the port-hole. They approached. Tarlin ran for them and slung himself at the feet of one of them. The man lurched over on to his face. The other was being engaged by the stranger.

"Go Tarlin" he shouted, already bruised and cut, "to get there you must run! Go! Go!" Tarlin hesitated, then on seeing the other man getting up he glanced once more at the battling stranger and squeezed himself through the window.

Outside the rain was still beating down and he found himself in another roadless street. He tried to suss what the stranger had said - 'white . . . to get there you must run'. Tarlin was tired, he would get no second chance now, he must run. Ahead of him was the long wet street of gloom. Run. But, only to the end? Run! And then? Run!! Tarlin ran, and ran - for his life. Fast, so fast, the rain stopped, faster, the ground smooth, lighter, faster, the buildings, lighter - further away. Faster!!

So bright, oh so bright. Everything had melted to white around him. Sky had merged with buildings had merged with the ground.

White, oh so white. Whiter than he had ever seen before. Whiter, much whiter than any clothes washed on telly. He had to squint his eyes. And ahead, a dot of grey amidst the white, getting smaller. A man? Perhaps. Hope. Again, Tarlin ran, and as he ran he looked. He was clean as he had come to start with. Getting closer - 'you must run, it's up to you'. Yes, a man.

"Stop!" he shouted. The man stopped. Tarlin ran up to him and caught his breath. "You!"

It was the stranger, in his hand a porcelain figurine.

"For you" he said, handing it to him.

"But, the -"

"Never happened. But they chose right, in you. Now there shall be a balance. Come, your gate is waiting."

Tarlin looked up at the trees in the night sky. Earlier they had been sitting round the fire, and here he was, sitting in the forest. Must have gone for a walk. He looked down at himself and saw that in his hand he was clutching a porcelain figurine, and for no reason he began to cry.

"I'm saving you" said Lent to April.

April smiled through her silver hair in summer. On the porch, they were, enjoying sun-threaded trees. Lazy, the days where the tall grass of the front jungle half-shielded giggling rug movements while beyond the feet of Heros protruded from the Volvo underside.

Lent lit up a Passing Cloud and watched the smoke as it infiltrated the atmosphere. "There are times when I have found myself staring like shit at you and not knowing why" he said after a while to April.

"Thank you" she said.

"No, wrong, not even that. Somehow, perhaps, against my will often."

"Oh?"

"As if with a thought, you, someone drew me to it." As he was saying this, unknown to April he was subtly moving his hand to the back of her dress, deceiving her concentrated attention. "Funny, isn't it?"

"Yes, odd!"

April was wearing a summer frock, tied at the back in a large bow. Lent managed to gently pull the bow until it fell undone.

"And then again there are times when I feel that things are just going to fall from around me leaving me naked to frustration." Lent couldn't help grinning.

"Oh? That's not so funny."

"Hey, point your arms toward me for a second!" he said, pretending it was a sudden impulse. Bewildered, she did so and he grabbed the sleeves and pulled her dress from her and ran down through the tall grass with it, leaving April with only a pair of panties on looking extremely bemused. Then she grinned and chased after him, holding her breasts as she ran.

Nice, for summer. It hadn't rained for quite some time, the

Amorites did not waste a moment of it, they'd be off in the car after work to wherever they felt like going, or they'd sit in the nairy garden until dusk and play about or act out plays from some of Clarence's books (that usually ended up as a farce with everyone joining in and making up their own parts). Synnan was on a new kick for some reason, this one involving the drinking of chosen water with a deal of ceremony as before. In any case, the effect was the same, they'd all end up rolling about stoned etc. But somehow no-one took her seriously any more, not even Cam.

Lent neatly dodged April and she went flying onto Amoritz and a girl called Israel or something. She found herself in an uncompromising position that Amoritz was not complaining about so they remained so until Lent pulled her up kissed her forcefully until she stopped struggling. "I'm saving you" he said and then they went back in through the front door as she put back on her dress and went into the kitchen.

Lent fingered about to try and find something to eat, getting in Cam's way as she was putting together some cups of tea.

"I might have to leave" said Lent, selecting a piece of lettuce and some spam which he put between some bread and butter. April looked up from an evening paper she was leafing through.

"Leave?" she said. "Why? When?"

"I don't know, I might have a job waiting up in London. Nothing definite yet, but the blod has a big brother up there."

April was silent. She looked sadly at him.

"If I do I'd like you to come too April."

"Yes, I want, but to leave..."

"Won't be easy. As I say, nothing definite."

"But you wouldn't say it if you weren't sure, I know you."

"Yes, you do." Lent lit up a cigarette and took a bite of the sandwich. Cam left the kitchen discreetly, carrying the tray of teacups. April got up and put her arms round Lent, resting her head on his chest. He put down his sandwich and stroked her hair.

"You don't have to come" he said, "I know how much this place means to you."

"I'm coming" she said.

2

Clarence was inspired. They had left him to paint the walls of one of the downstairs bedrooms at the back of the house. He'd done half of one wall with several stops in about three hours, and then he sat down on a chair in the middle of the room and contemplated the fact that he'd barely started and it would take him years to complete the room and then he'd probably have to do another one.

"I've run out of paint" he said to Alice in the kitchen, taking a sip of his ninth cup of coffee.

"Run out?!"

"Yes, not a very big tin, that."

"Oh, well I suppose you'd better take some money out of the fund and get some more then."

"Right!" He ran out of the kitchen and into the front room where he produced a small tin box from underneath the bed with the heavy red cover. He took out what he wanted and put the tin back.

Some time later he returned with about five tins of paint.

Alice greeted him with a cold stare as he came in.

"Huh! You've hardly started on that tin and you've been at it over four hours, and what's this?"

"Paint!" He grinned and went into the back room and put the cans down. Alice stood motionless in the doorway with her arms folded and stared at him. He methodically opened each can in turn. There was blue, black, red, green and yellow. Then he took his paint brush, dipped it into each can in turn and splashed a multicoloured streak on the wall.

It's hard to define madness. Alice had a strange feeling she had found it, not in the least recognising artistic frustration when, before her very eyes, it was being worked off.

Some time later Clarence finished. He collapsed against the window and surveyed his labour. It was good- well he thought so, not perhaps as good as when he attempted to nail boards onto the floor of the attic and came up with a contemporary Michaelangelo, that still remained, the initial impetus to make the attic habitable long since gone. Then there was the time he helped Hiros to renovate the upholstery in the light blue volvo, but he didn't get very far in his Baroque fantasies of gilded divans because Hiros decided that he'd better do the work himself. Clarence seemed to have a 'knack' of getting out of almost any kind of toil presented to him, just by showing off his relative sanity to others. Strange, he thought. He had fun for knowing he was sane, they had fun for thinking he was insane - in any case the situation was good from both sides and he was allowed almost unlimited freedom of word or action because they expected it from him. He knew very well that elsewhere he would be labelled as a 'public menace' or something, and no doubt locked up for his revellations.

April came into the room with Lent and they stared at Clarence who was flashing a cheeky grin.

"The room needed brightening up" he said. "You don't get much sun this side of the house."

Lent grinned also.

"I like it" said April. They all once again surveyed the colours.

"I hear you're going" said Clarence after a while.

"Yes, I've got a job up in the big city, get a car as well."

"When?" said Clarence. He'd always liked Lent.

"A week." April looked at Lent.

"You didn't tell me it was so soon!" She looked shocked, her eyes were beginning to water.

Lent turned away from her, glanced at Clarence who was trying to look concerned, and then left the room. April stood there, almost falling over, sobbing loudly. Clarence went over and put his arm round her.

"The bastard," she said, "the bastard."

3

The flight.....

In summer something,

Leaving

Bade you to who - so long

So long something.

To be as Ibuttercups

The bee-rover

Were you hyacinths in higher places -

Request, yours.

My my, grass for all, growing

Showing but the pasture, flowing

Knowing how the birdsong, sowing

Seeing, growing, growing.

Were it I to leave

Manure, but he

So pure?

Soon glasses

Clink

Drown it all away

And then it never happened.

But no, by ration!

Clouds obscured by trees

Not trees obscured by clouds

Leaving

To it, travel

Leaving

From it

We, submit

Your ambience by half

By varying degrees

Relative

To the trimmings unencumbered
With a word to fly,
Directive one
We hope in place of tangibility
Of betterment
To you and us to you
Returning
With improvement to be seen
Perhaps
As more than something
And with us
Yours,
Your humble people
We hope to remain, with you
As
Something Lent.

4

The next day, which cried on them as rain summed up the situation, it was discovered, after breakfast, that April had disappeared. She neither slept with anyone the night before, or eat her cornflakes with the others. Her belongings seemed to be all there, but a certain amount of necessities were missing, as if she'd planned on staying somewhere for a long weekend or something. When Lent was told, he sussed that she had gone for a week, to give her enough time to be sure he was gone by the time she returned. Lent usually prided himself, in a sense, for remaining calm in difficult situations, but at the minute he was being slowly torn apart inside. He had dealt with his situation in a very untactful manner, he had not looked before he leaped. And now, committed to a job away from his friends, the girl he loved had gone with no clue as to where he could find her. It seemed like it had all been purposely planned for his imminent destruction, which he could feel coming on at any moment, the final blow somehow yet to come. He had visions of finding her prostrate on

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the bank of a suburban canal, her brains blown out with a gun. But that was making his value to her as he saw it sound conceited, and that was one thing he couldn't stand from himself. He had to find her.

Hiros was in the room of the bed with the heavy red cover reading a paper in one of the chairs with the matching wear marks.

"Hiros, I've got to borrow the car."

Hiros looked up and then fumbled in his pocket for the key.

"Oh, the key is already in it" he said.

Lent sped out. "Thanks" he said as he was going through the front door.

He got into the car and turned on the ignition. The thing started first time. It occurred to him that he had no idea where he was going, but this was no time to worry over such details. The car rattled away and disappeared as it turned the corner at the far end of Esthaesia Street.

Clarence continued the decorating of the back room to simplicity, and this, to say the least, surprised the Amorites. He seemed strangely content with laying carpet and fitting accessories in an entirely orthodox manner. The carpet in question they had obtained through one of their many contacts, this one surprisingly was in the carpet trade. It was a plain yellow carpet, with the odd stain here and there, and even those Clarence made nothing of which was quite against his nature. Instead he made sure they came in places where he could conceal them by putting the furnishings on top. The furnishings in question were obtained from a bricklayer friend who would visit them from time to time, always with the odd bit of new looking 'junk' he picked up from the most unusual places. There was a cupboard - cum - bookshelf, a suite of odd furniture that went together, and a pair of tables, one large and one small of a similar design. In fact Clarence was working with the artfulness of fitter, or a poet with something on his mind.

And Lent was looking. He had visited several of the castles he

thought she might have gone to, but none of them had even heard of her, let alone seen her. He was becoming desperate, crazed. His visions of her lying dead were becoming more and more vivid. So he went to the only waterway for miles and there was no-one there. He sat in the car, and his cocktail thoughts buzzed behind his eyes.

Their plan was to finally do away with the cotton curtains and the heavy red cover, the empty fireplace and the strategically placed small patterned rug, and the two chairs with matching wear-marks. So the two beds that were in the back room were now in there, and the chairs with the matching wear-marks had been relegated to the garden with no great bad feeling. The small patterned rug was now strategically put into Synnan's room and the cotton curtains were replaced with heavy red curtains and thrown out into the garden along with the chairs. And by now Clarence was very tired and distraught, and they were all hungry as it smelled of dinner time and it was getting dark.

Lent sat in ~~the~~ car and watched the sun go down as he thought of his love, somewhere in the the tarmac expanse he had covered over and over. He thought of the few words it would take so that it would all be over, and they would be happy and no qualms about arriving in the big city together, and through them the Amorites would be happy as well. He had never tried to define happiness, never tested it, unlike Clarence. He thought he believed in it, but then he thought on how evil it can be when it is taken away, with an even chance of never returning. It seemed ridiculous, one mistake on his part and all this. You have to be so careful. And when the sun went down and the sky was beginning to darken into night, Lent turned on the ignition and drove back towards Constantine.

You see, the room was for the party.

By The Day they had done it all out very well. There seemed to be plenty of booze for them all, a largish supply of dope had been specially imported by Synnan for the occasion. Other accessories like sounds, food etc had been supplied by Tarlin, Cam etc.

And there they all were on The Day (the evening of) sipping at their drinks, inhaling smoke and listening. The irony being that Lent, unhappy, was the centre of conversation in a way that he had never been before as long as he had been at Constantine. As a result of his pressures he was drinking and smoking more than the rest, and looking very worried and perhaps feeling a bit ill as well. In a way, they were 'humouring' him by their conversation and the fact they were not telling him he'd 'had enough', an experiment in tact as it were, which is bad in a way.

He was thinking about April. He had since she left. It was strange that you seem to like someone more when you are deprived of them than when they are with you, like happiness. He wondered if she felt the same way and that it was only pride that was keeping her from returning to him. And to make things somehow worse, Cam seemed to be sticking unusually close to him, perhaps the fact he was going bringing a feeling out in her that under usual circumstances would not be aroused. Had April been there he would probably have been in bed with Cam by now, but the fact she wasn't there meant both that he wasn't in the mood and that he would feel like he was deceiving April if he went to bed with Cam - and yet it was by her choice she wasn't there and for all he knew she was in bed with someone else anyway. Ridiculous.

By one o'clock the atmosphere was one of woozy contentment. Strewed bodies was the scene, booze left but now unwanted. The joint rolling kit was discarded in a corner, along with a half torn up cornflakes packet. There were no lights on in the room, only the dim moonlight penetrating the smoky atmosphere through the window. Cam was quite happily snuggled up to Lent who was, oblivious to

her, shedding a few heavy tears in the advantage of the dark.

Then, without word, a figure stood motionless in the doorway of the newly painted room. Tears too were welling in her eyes. And then there was a body under the other arm of Lent and he was crying for a different reason.

"I'm sorry" they said, and giggled.

6

They all agreed it was a nice car. Alongside the light blue Volvo it was magnificent. A Renault it was called, strange but true. They would have a flat waiting for them in London.

The flight.....

In summer something,

Leaving

Bade you to who - so long

So long something.

With the little that they were taking with them, the Amorites were helping as much as possible to put into the car. A few blankets and stuff, not as before for green gardens but now for a flat they were not sure to be furnished.

To be as Ibuttercups

The bee-rover

Were you hyacinths in higher places-

Request, yours.

Strange, somehow, to leave one jungle and go to another. What, were they gaining? Now the concrete jungle, now to a land of strangers, all they had was each other.

My, my, grass for all, growing

Showing but the pasture, flowing

Knowing how the birdsong, sowing

Seeing, growing, growing.

He'd brought out of Cam what he'd never seen before at the party, when April had returned they did go to bed together as a threesome, and Cam was good, as if she'd stored it up ever since

she had known him, as if expecting the Day to come.

Were it I to leave

Manure, but he

So pure?

Soon.....glasses

Clink

Drown it all away

And then it never happened.

And saying goodbye is so hard. Lent would like to have kissed, made love to all the girls before he left, as they him, but they all knew it would have made things worse. Likewise April. And so they left with a few words and drove away in the purring Renault. It was the best way, but they didn't speak, the Amorites didn't move.

But no, by ration!

Clouds obscured by trees

Not trees obscured by clouds

Leaving

To it, travel

Leaving

From it

As they made their way back into Constantine, as Lent and April made their way to London, it was just a question of accepting the situation.

We,submit

Your ambience by half

By varying degrees

Relative

To the trimmings unencumbered

The rest of the day being spent in now trivia, to eat, to love, to sleep, to be. Some would see it, some, like perhaps Cam, awaiting their return, sickened by London. For now they were long gone, for now they had to sleep, if possible, as they imagined

Lent and April to be doing alone for the first time now.

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With a word to fly,
Directive one
We hope in place of tangibility.
Of betterment
To you and us to you
Returning
With improvement to be seen

By afternoon of the next day their thoughts had changed less from selfish loss to the hope that by now they were finding their feet up in London. They were getting down to the usual run of things at Constantine, and to say the least were not expecting anyone when they had a visitor round about tea time.

Perhaps
As more than something
And with us
Yours,
Your humble people

A visitor called April who came in and collapsed on the floor, her bandaged leg, stitched face shedding tears, showing despair.

"The car -" she said. "He's dead."

We hope to remain, with you
As
Something Lent.

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