Spring 1968

ICON Spring 1968

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My option
is to seize
rainbows
and tumble,
abandoned,
into May
while beckoning
the platitudes
of a June warmth.

Susan Bystrey

BREAK FROM THE SEA

John Thomas Hand

The clean spread of your thighs
Rocks, a beat near landfall,
Where the ocean spends its cataract of power
And tosses shells, glass, timber enough
To build all the houses on this continent.
Break from the sea, let your body show
The sweetness of its acrid smell,
Wafted on these lines of dawn,
These waves of air that move
To hold our land, this fading west.
in sorrow i conceive, at last,
    the enormity of war
    and the redness of blood.
in sorrow i conceive, at last,
    the sheerness of security
    and the sureness of death.

how often i wish that i could go back
to younger days . . .
when red was merely the color of wine,
but youth spends itself on wisdom,
and what will the wisdom buy?
the impact of reality?
shall i conceive in sorrow, at last?

Christine Dedon
The slashing rays of the sun
lying in the narrow channel from chen-hearted cypress
eternal scream. Proteus sobbing with the setting sun
black-barked caverns of black waters. And Juniper
of mind. All—in the shade

—the wind is warm for
magnolias heavy—oh! too
him—God damn him!
—But why this fever? I
he drives me to this fever
—Who is that harlequin?
Strange, strangely old, W
muddy mask? What strange
-ime, -ime, -ime . . .
—There's not enough time
chill touch now. And back
Cold-dead snow. The poet
felt life . . .
—Oh! I turn to stone
My god, what have I done
chilled and turned to stone
Answer me, Answer me! . . .
—No answer?
—No answer, No answer,
—Strange, the wind chill!
Are those my legs? Ha! I
phoenix! All is ash now, F
no, to ashes, Venus is nought but
—What! What is this st
Plunging me into the well,
-eping, -eping, -eping, -ep

James Van Gilder
The slashing rays of the setting sun glaze the pools of dark water lying in the narrow channels between dying-brown lily pads. And from chon-hearted cypress forests, sun-crowned night begins her eternal scream. Protean shadows fall, changing and again changing with the setting sun; and shapeless things scurry through black-barked caverns of quarried root, that push down through black waters. And Jangian shapes scurry through Shadow-pools of mind. All—in the shadows of mind . . .

— the wind is warm tonight . . . warm, so very warm. And the magnolias heavy—oh! too sweet, too, too sweet! Damn him, damn him!—God damn him!

— But why this fever? I shouldn't care. I shouldn't care! He—he drives me to this fever? It's his fault . . .


— There's not enough time. Soon winter will come. I—I feel his chill touch now. And back at home, snow will cover all. And cold. Cold dead snow. The poetess—she will die . . . die before she ever felt life . . .

— Oh! I turn to stone at the thought of his touch! Oh, God! My god, what have I done! You touched your torch to me, and I chilled and turned to stone. You let him; you let him! Why? Why? Answer me. Answer me! . . .

— No answer?

— No answer. No answer, -swer, -swer, -swer, -swer . . .

— Strange, the wind chills. It whips at my legs. Is that the wind? Are those my legs? Ha! ha! ha! And between them?—a marble phoenix! All is ash now. From dust to dust! Ha! ha! From ashes to ashes. Venus is nought but marble ash . . . her beauty consumed itself . . .

— What! What is this strange feeling that's sweeping over me? Plunging me into the well, into the well, in to the well; weeping, -weeping, -weeping, -weeping, -weeping, -weeping . . .

continued
The willow branches languish in the warm wind. And whitecaps wash easily to the beach across the lake in the calm breath before the storm. Backeye rain from chestnut trees as storm clouds weeping heavy tears. The sun is sinking quickly behind the serrated silhouette of chestnuts as if anxious to yield to night, and large hunch-backed patches of shadow play on the breast of the dark green water. Gilt-edged tree trunks support sunset, and fire-flowers of color burst on the inflamed dome of cloud, as love bursts in the hollow of man. And the willows bend gently with their weeping.

—I"m a man now. You and I are one. I don't regret a single second of it—of what we've done. I love you! Can't you understand that? You're mine now. I made you mine! It's not just a passing thing with me. I gave my whole soul to you. You own it. And I own you—in the same way. You must understand. You've got to. You've got to deal with what's real. And what happened is real...

—What's this letter? What does it mean. It doesn't make sense. It's not logical. Why would you send the letter now? It doesn't make sense. It just doesn't make sense! Why wouldn't you want to marry me? I can give you everything. Dad has money—we can live with him. He wouldn't mind. I know he wouldn't! And if you wanted, you could finish school....

—Ah, damn it, this is absurd!... Take that, you stupid rock!... There. That's it. Sink right down to the bottom. Right to the bottom...

—It wasn't wrong! I mean—I love you. I—I want to marry you. Don't you understand? And even if you feel it was wrong, it's done now. What's done is done. We can't change it. What we've got to do now is plan the future. I mean, what we did was only natural. And everyone is doing it. I mean, you know—morality isn't like it was twenty years ago. If you love someone, it's alright. And why would you do it if you didn't love me? You're not that kind of girl...

—It doesn't make any sense that you won't see me again. It's not logical after what's happened between us. You've got to love me! You've just got to.

From the silhouetted cypress flows a sluggish, shadow-stream, which mushrooms out infinitely in indefinite dark pools covered with dead-green water plants, then narrows into a deep, brooding channel which passes beneath a softly swaying suspension bridge. From the tangled jungle of plant stems swims a white-mouth water moccasin. It passes quickly and quietly in its infinite search for prey. As night steals on, its mask reflected from above the bridge, its red eyes begin...
As night steals on, it breaks water and shatters the harlequin mask reflected from above. Then, liquidly it glides in silence under the bridge, its red eyes burning with cold fire, its cotton mouth darkening to an ebony slit, its long, wet body gliding, gliding, gliding...

—What made me do it? Why did I give in? What was I thinking of? Am I that weak? Then, maybe it's better if...
—No! I can't! I can't.
—And yet, Sappho is dying. Dying from a rape with a slide-rule. Her warped womb is woven with semen. It will swell and bleed. It will burn black. Then it will break open like burnt marshmallow. There will be no more creating. Sappho dies...
—Sappho!
—Get control of yourself! Get hold of yourself, I say. It's too late to lament, fool. Stupid little fool! Stop it! Stop it! Crying won't help. It can't help now...
—That's better. Now stop the sobbing. Look what he's done to you. It would make him happy if he knew. Yes, he would like you burdened with child—his child. It would make you his forever. I would be his forever? Forever, ever, ever, ever...
—The pact is sealed. Midnight will strike. Faust can never win.
—One mistake, only one mistake. And this has to happen to me. One dumb mistake! Only one time, -ime, -ime, -ime...
—I'm your record, Father. On my body, and yes, my soul, you leave your footprints...
—I hate you, Bobby! I hate you! You did this to me. You said nothing would happen. And it did! You betrayed me! You betrayed me! I can't love you now. I can't. But you wouldn't understand. You wouldn't understand! I know you wouldn't. And because you wouldn't—because you can't, I can't love you.
—Oh, how quickly the passion passed. How soon it was over. I burn with the shame of it! I'm tired with shame! My cheeks are red and warm. My womb is scared! My memory flames! I'm covered with shame, -ame, -ame, -ame. I hate you! I hate you, Bobby!
—What will they say? -ay, -ay, -ay... betray!

The willow branches dance to storm winds as they watch cloud-chariots scurry to cover the sky. They howl up; then snap open with a whiplash. The lake purples, except for a fleeting slash of sun, and the waves churn to froth against the beach. A piece of driftwood slams endlessly into a rotting dock. On-rushing night moans departing day with funereal moans, and where the last rays touch the darkly towering chestnuts on the south shore of the lake, dim lanterns seem to glow. Then the rain falls and dims all to shapelessness.
—Must get inside. I’m soaked. There, close the cabin door. Roy, it’s really coming down . . . really coming down. It will snow soon. School will start soon, and when she gets back—then, she’ll understand, I’ll make her understand. I mean—there’s no reason why she shouldn’t. She must love me. She has to—she gave herself freely . . .

—But, I’m getting worked up for nothing. Of course, she loves me. And when she gets back, everything will be alright. I can give her everything. She’s just confused . . . bothered by the old Puritan code. She feels guilty, but she shouldn’t. I’ll make her understand. Love is giving yourself. And that’s what she did. She’s got to understand that sex isn’t good or bad—it just is. It’s a reality, a fact.

—We had great fun here this summer. She never did learn to swim, but next year I’ll teach her. Next summer—next summer will be great, just great!

—He wouldn’t understand! He couldn’t understand! I made a mistake—I just made a mistake. Stupid, stupid, little fool! He’s just like the rest—with their dim eyes, with their worlds that measure four by four, with their heads always in the mud . . .

—and I hate him! I hate him!

—Do you hear me, Bobby? I hate you!

—But what can I do? What can I do? There’s no answer . . .
time betrays me. Seven more months!

—I hate you, Bobby! Bobby Time, Bobby Time, Bobby Time, -ime, -ime, -ime . . .

—I’m swelling. Look at that stomach! See it grow! Look at it! I see it growing now! It’s growing now, right now. A huge, ugly wart, art, art, art . . .

—Dies, Art dies.

—I don’t want his child! I hate it I hate it!

—I’ll beat this thing out of me! I’ll kill it! The little worm that breathes inside me—I’ll kill it! Take that! Ohhhh! And that! Ohhhh! I’ll smash this thing! Ohhhh! I’ll kill it!

—Kill it—ohhh—kill it—ohhh—kill it! Bastard! Bastard! Bastard! Bobby Bastard, art dies, time, betray, Bobby Time . . . only one way. Have to

Tangled roots reach out to accept the tanned body is it sinks beneath the black water. The last rays of sun disappear behind the cypress, the somber, womb-mouth mossain glides easily into night, while shapeless things scurry in the mind . . .

Heaven was a dream, and that was all.
That night I sobbed, and that was all.
With tender sighs and love's sweet voice,
As shepherd moved the herds of stars that were the world.
That shone no more.

One summer night

A sweet warm smile came to me;
That wafted gently through my soul;
And stirred me deep within myself.
For, she, too, saw.

One summer night

Our own small cot
A pillow laid within her curves
Little I cared if...
That night her smile was a dream
Little I cared if...
World bear with me.

One summer night

She laughed at me, I guessed;
She kissed me as I wept;
And I looked to sky;
As I sang the song...

On summer days
ONE SUMMER NIGHT

Jerry Vandegrift

Heaven was a dream I thought,
That night I sought what young men bought
With tender sighs and silken words
As shepherd moon watched o'er celestial herds
Of stars that walked on velvet skies
That shone no brighter than her eyes

One summer night.

A sweet warm scent embraced the air
That wafted gently from her hair
And stirred me to vows I needn't make
For, she, too, saw that time would forsake

One summer night.

Our own small eden that night did bring,
A pillow land where Caress reigned king.
Little I cared if saints did frown
That night her silken hair came down;
Little I cared if morning sun
Would bear witness to innocence I'd undone

One summer night.

She laughed at sunset. She smiled at dawn.
She kissed me at daybreak, then she was gone.
And I looked toward what fate would bring
As I sang the songs that all men sing

On summer days.
SHAH: in hesitant afterthought . . .

Susan Bystry

There was once a
time of cocoon
felt protection
and nestling concern;
a feel of warmth
produced by
the sharing
of essence that
has consumed
the fire;
the embers left
are starved
remnants of
a care too long
present;
Now sunlight
beckons me while
midnight screams
its incandescent
sounds as emptiness
surrounds and
I run grasping
the neon brightness
of beauty half-spent.
I offer a sixpence
for a moment—
return it in
the brilliance
of tomorrow while
superlatives
demand now.

I waved at the blank
smiles,
who shared popsies
when Wyndell and
us all.
He ran on to rape
prison for life.
Oh Christ, did I
But the smiles had
glares—
Not bothering now.
I am sorry Mrs.
the incense smolders
    and comes to me slowly
    in curls of musty fragrance;

a gift once fit for a king
    now turns to ashes
    in my tarnished burner.

Christine Dedon

I waved at the black brows and tan
smiles,
who shared popsicles and played ball,
when Wyndell could run faster than
us all.
He ran on to rape some cop's sister—
prison for life.
Oh Christ, did I have fun with them;
But the smiles have faded into black, sweaty, sullen
glares—
Not bothering nor wanting to notice me,
I am sorry Mrs. King.

Robert Alvarez
"Last week, you said that I can Dream simply because in me as a black man. It that I am out of its reach in me, you would not have matter, your Harlem. If Martin Luther King would Washington. In essence, for the black man is, in Nightmare. What I am is lost faith, and my people and possibly America. We are elected President, who my people's faith in Amer..."
"Last week, you said that you believed in the American Dream. Well sir, I am sorry to report that I do not believe in the American Dream simply because the American Dream does not believe in me as a black man. It has turned its back on me and told me that I am out of its reach, for if the American Dream did believe in me, you would not have your Newark, your Watts, or, for that matter, your Harlem. If the American Dream did believe in me, Martin Luther King would be leading the Poor People's March on Washington. In essence, Mr. Vice-President, the American Dream for the black man is, in reality, nothing more than the American Nightmare. What I am saying, Mr. Vice-President, is that I have lost faith, and my people have lost faith, in the American Dream, and possibly America. My question to you, sir, is this: If you are elected President, what will you do to restore my faith and my people's faith in America and the American Dream?"
MONTAGE II

Jay Silverman

Under somewhat normal conditions
ice cream afternoons
and Sundays in clover

She will beam
an envious sun rivals her rays
but are only mirrored
contoured on her cheek.

She stands . . . rigid
She will cope with all games
There is never a need for involvement
Rules do not exist . . . she ignores them
Under somewhat normal conditions
Hopscotching the tattersal walkways
or dressing in mohair and plaid

Her walls are solid
words become rushes of air
and only she chooses what to believe.
But, under somewhat normal conditions
the end of a dream
the beginning of . . . well, a beginning

She will die
Salted tracks replace a thumbprint on her cheek
soft . . . soft my child
gossamer on chiffon

She will cry
and I huddle
in the shadow of her tears
afraid to watch
frozen in the sun.
"NORTH WIND" (sandstone)  

by Nicholas Verina
Sing a song of civilization,
A pocketful of wry.
Four and twenty scapegoats,
Baked in a casuists' pie;
When the pie was opened,
The Church began to sing:
Wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before the king?

The queen was in the countinghouse,
Counting the king's money;
The maid was in the bedroom
(Shes was the king's honey);
All the rest were in the garden,
Washing the dirty clothes,
And stopping only long enough
To thumb their nose.

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was trying to gran that once was trying to gran that once was trying to gran that once was trying to gran that one...
it was here—once—

i know, i can feel its presence.
a part of myself reaches—
strives—

trying to grasp the elusiveness
that once was—but is no more

it is gone now and won't
return . . .
i cry fake tears
to show those (vultures!) gathering
round that i really did care—
and the dryness of them burns
the flesh of my face—
engraves twin memorials
attesting to my cry,
“i cared, i really did care.”

but no one hears . . .

how could they? i whisper
these things in my sleep—
to the moth-wings
that make up dreams
as the warm sands trickle down

and tear the red curtain
of my private

night.

John Mallozzi
UNCOMMON

Patrick Greene

I stand apart from the commoner. They judge others, but not themselves. They retard wit and wisdom and art, and love, and beauty with apathy and ignorance and sodalistic gangrene.

I stand apart, although I'm not a tower of wisdom or strength. I am not cunning or beautiful. My mind is often ahead of or behind that of the mob cattle. I lust, sometimes, without love. No matter. I am I. I stand apart.

I stand apart, but once in awhile I see light break through darkness and illuminate a new brain which turns to thinking as an art seeks and owns his every thought. He is he, my friend, and he stands apart.
WEEDS IN STRAIGHT GARDENS

John Mallozzi

The crooked weed 'round the straight rose twists,
straining to feel the light caressing its dark and secret leaves
lest they die from lack of favor;
striving to show itself unshaded—but cautious—
for the clouds move swiftly in this garden of straight flowers and all different species,
no matter how true,
are quickly ripped and their roots laid bare.

With tender strength—sunlight reticent instrument, for through all the ages of Life's throbbing pulse, the coordinated,
in the rhythm of Sappho's in the strings of David's on the lips of Isis,
springing from the bow in the flute's wailing beam at Alexander's wedding in the Luba beat, in the mind of our deaf and the soul of Shankar He guided her ascending and barely perceptible, from drifting, surging, sweating concentrated within an ever his instrument.

In his magic hands she laid But they trembled, for the beasts, and they challenged
With tender strength—supple fingers, steady lips—the musician gave life to his reticent instrument, forcing vibrations through her intricate network of passages, through all the ages of man: born together in some forgotten past, begotten of Life's throbbing pulse, they danced with perfect innocence, coordinated, in the rythm of Sappho's songs, in the strings of David's harp, on the lips of Isis, springing from the bowels of Yang and Yin, in the flute's wailing before the pyre, at Alexander's wedding, in the Luba beat, in the mind of our deaf composer, and the soul of Shankar. He guided her ascending and descending scales, now moving rapidly now merging, barely perceptible, from note to amorphous note, in synchronized synchopation: drifting, surging, sweating through eons and kaleidoscopic moods, compressed, concentrated within an encompassing vacuum of liquid tension—the musician and his instrument. In his magic hands she laughed and she cried. But they trembled, for the beauty of their music surpassed that of the birds and beasts, and they challenged even the gods.

Jo Ann Stifler
MONTAGE I . . . *It pleut dans ma chambre* (it's raining in my room)

Jay Silverman

I

*Une place où il n'y pas murs*
Failing to notice the screaming signal light
I run to the safety of the moonchild.

As usual . . . she waits
dark
kimono clad paper doll selling pleasure and assorted pains.

Lost in a swirling vortex of sandalwood
I pay my yen and enter into agony.

The pulsating origami
cries
moans
and exits with professional courtesy . . . bowing
Charlie Chaplin adorned in silken finery.

II

*Il pleut dans ma chambre*
Rain . . . spattering . . . dripping . . . sloshing . . .
a glycerine protective veil guards the secrets of night.

And we, the watchers, wait in silence.
Rain . . . pelting . . . stinging
dissolves the curtain.

Soon, ten thousand Mrs. Andersons will send ten thousand
Johnnies and Sues out on to the street.

I DON'T WANT TO SEE
I CAN'T LOOK INTO THE
the children kneeling
beneath my window
they sing their
Hopsocotching their way to their
they never tire . . . . only
ring around the
ring around the

DON'T SING
YOUR GAIETY DAMNED
ring around the
ring around the

QUIT YOUR STUPID DANCE
DON'T YOU KNOW THE

When will you learn that
only exist for a short time
Then . . . then your swe.
die and forever gel
as the melted gum drop fl

MY CHILDREN
MY FRUITS

You cannot slide down a
I have never seen
I DON'T WANT TO SEE THEM
I CAN'T LOOK INTO THEIR EYES

the children know all the stories
beneath my window
they sing their afternoon trivia
Hopscotching their way to dusk
they never tire . . . . only die
ring around the rosie
ring around the rosie

DON'T SING
YOUR GAIETY DAMNS MY DEAFNESS

ring around the rosie
ring around the rosie

QUIT YOUR STUPID LITTLE GAMES
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY NEVER LAST?

When will you learn that gum drop flowers and licorice trees
only exist for a short time . . . a very short time
Then . . . then your sweet youth will rot
die and forever gel
as the melted gum drop flowers.

MY CHILDREN
MY FRUITS

You cannot slide down rainbows
I have never seen a rainbow.

continued
III

At the sign of the stained glass citadel
I suddenly feel a need
funny . . .
I haven't felt that for many years now.
    Father . . . help me
    go away
    Father . . . please
    go away
But Father you must
    must I? . . . will soft words be balm for your follies?
    no . . . go away.

And Jesus . . .
staring at me from high atop his marble cross
cries one two thousand year old tear
as the stone crucifix falls
smashed,
All that remains is a deaf crystaline ear . . . and I continue
ever searching with Oedipal eyes
searching for one place on' it n'y pus mars . . .
a place where there are no walls.

IV

All the while, the moonchild quietly waits.
She whispers her song
like the mythodical sirens of Hell.
    come . . . . come
There is no time for colored kites and mache' dragons
    and I enter into agony.
IT'S RAINING IN MY ROOM
THE STRANGER

Jo Ann Stiffler

With the patience of Job
he sits upon a white porcelain dunghill,
reading the kabala
engraved within the Motor Bar’s belly.
“There’s no rest
in the restroom,”
thinks this Hasid
(perhaps Buber’s ghost)
as he deciphers the esoteric numbers on the wall.
“Bang,”
says the door
as the bathroom brigade marches in,
and his heart leaps —
takes the plunge of faith
into our existentialists’ abyss of nothingness—
and hope begins to flood his soul,
or his cock,
or something does;
and he wants to love
and be loved,
or something.
As the voices echo
muffled reverberating social grooming,
he can understand
only the punctuations:
“Wow . . . wow . . . like wow”.
And the flower phonies leave.
Then an old man
with thick glasses and a musty mustache
stumbles in,
undesirable and available;
and the stranger knows
that Easter is a dream.
BIRTHDAY POEM

Alex Gildzen

Unable to sleep
these past
black hours,

I rise sweating
to start another year
tired and hurt.

I've found
all the bright
colors.

There's nothing
left to celebrate
but the night.
BROWN BODY

Susan Bystry

Brown body
long, slim —
my first.
Black hairs
protecting a
soft caressed
groin.
Hands that touch,
probe,
hurt,
in gentle sweetness.
His smell assailing
my nostrils
as I gulp
for his manhood—
Acceptance
is momentary.

Light shatters
the self-imposed
darkness
and I see him,
sculptured,
Nigerian prince—
bend toward me.
Nancy Gnat
JUNK MAIL

A reading by Jay Silverman

(The stage is pre-set, it is anywhere... the time is today, yesterday, tomorrow or never... The costuming is simple, the player is naked, open, vulnerable to the attacks of the audience... He stands beneath a bare spot and begins to read.)

(Continued)

X. August second, nineteen sixty-four.
My dearest, dearest son,

I saw you here last night. You wouldn’t talk to me. You just stood there, grey eyed and sick. Your body shook and you sweated and vomited and were carried away in your own sea of body fluids. You screamed SH’MA... SH’MA... FOR CHRIST’S SAKE SH’MA... and you crashed through the window, glass piercing your throat and cancelling sound.

I called to you, but my voice only croaked and blood came to my lips... so I lost you in the damp sheets of morning.

The white carbolic whore comes in and puts towels on my head. She thinks I’m the Pasha of Peru or something. She runs her calloused hands over my body and my skin bubbles and turns to wax. She then proceeds to mold me into animal figures and leaves... The towels fall off my head onto the urine soaked rug and the Pasha of Peru digs into a hole... his magic carpet lifeless, not wanting to fly tonight...

Love, Dad.
(Lights down for two minutes . . . a scream is heard . . . laughter, screeching. Lights up . . . the sound continues.)

August tenth, nineteen sixty-four.

X. My dearest, dearest son,

The blue cold has frozen my guts. My arms and legs, festered and bleeding lie dead at my side. The mattress stinks . . . Blood sins the whiteness of the sheets . . . . . . They come in every hour and stuff thermometers in every hole in my body . . . Then they read them, one at a time, adding machines ticking, to make sure I'm still alive. They huddle in a corner and laugh behind their sterile masks.

I try to spit . . . swear . . . urinate, but I am crystalized. A frozen mimic of death.

We had a party last night. It was on the lawn. I stood naked, frozen in a puddle of hypodermic excrement, veins stiff, mind crystalized and eyeballs solid, staring into the night for a never to be found fix.

The show began. Lesbian dancers made angel figures in the snow.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," the M.C. said, "isn't that great?" Let's give the little ladies a big hand." We rushed on stage and spit on them.

"Wonderful, Wonderful," and the dancers left the stage smiling and applauding themselves.

We had a band. Seven trumpet players played funeral music and we all danced. "Change partners," I grabbed a girl. She screamed and kicked and we had sex in the snow.

"How about it folks?" (applause) "Let's really hear it for them now." (more applause) "Well, that's about it folks . . . . . . and his face swelled with blood as he fell dead to the ground.

The night screamed with the blast of trumpets and one by one the musicians fell dead, currents of blood spilling from their horns. "ENCORE . . . ENCORE . . . BRAVO," a thousand junky voices called.

Refreshments were served as blind waiters in stained capes passed trays of empty hypos. Ten thousand burnt out veins sprang to life . . . wanting . . . . ever wanting. It was a great affair, but eventually the music faded into the night . . . the snow turned to ice . . . and we froze in the shadow of the moon.

DAD.

continued
(lights down . . . a long pained scream is heard, groans . . . more screams . . . lights up . . . X is alone on the stage again . . . he is no longer reading . . . his voice is heard, but he is not reading . . . he can only react.)

X. My dearest son,

I'm coming home . . . . cleansed . . . . sterile . . . . empty of the poison that so long ran through my veins . . . . son . . . .

I'm coming home.

Love, Dad.

X. (he begins to moan, to scream . . . he is no longer a man . . . he is no longer a reasoner of ideas . . . he can only react. He leaves the stage screaming . . . crying out curses . . . he stumbles and crawls to the exit door and falls . . . quiet . . . maybe dead . . . the curtain does not fall . . . the reading is over.)
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