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FLAMINGO

ROLLINS COLLEGE

1933



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# THE FLAMINGO

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*To the Readers of the Flamingo:*

*The Rollins Flamingo is devoted to a two fold purpose: first, it should serve as a proving grounds for all those of creative inclinations on this campus and, second, it must hold interest and appeal for all its readers, both students and outsiders.*

*In trying to reconcile these aims we shall doubtless make many mistakes. Our judgment is not omniscient nor are our tastes universal.*

*Neither do authors spring full blown from nebulous and unseen origins. Their development is dependent to a large extent on the test of the published manuscript.*

*In our endeavors to provide this test we appeal, not for your indulgence, but for an honest, kindly and tolerant consideration of our problems and of the measure of success we achieve in meeting them.*

THE EDITOR

# THE FLAMINGO

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THE BROTHERS

CARROLL COONEY

THE sky had toned down to a sunset haze and evening's melancholy hush slowly crept in between the hills. Shrill bird notes became noticeably loud but trees were dreary and slept.

Hidden away in a lonely clearing far back in the valley was a small wooden house. Around its immediate vicinity grass grew, struggling vainly to keep an evenness of length and color, and near the lone door a single group of plain flowers strove weakly by themselves to whisper friendship to the paintworn house. A person passing by on the dirt road that once led to the old mill, though he would, perhaps, be charmed by the place, would more likely be moved by a certain quality of sadness and pity . . . a pity, on most occasions, of a mellow note, but on this particular evening the house was mournfully bitter and alone in shadows that gradually faded till they blended with the dusk.

In the diminishing light, two figures came from behind the house and moved slowly across the grass. A closer observation would have shown the figures to be those of two young boys. Both walked as if great fatigue weighed their slim legs and both carried garden implements. The shorter boy, who was undoubtedly the younger, held a hoe balanced across a narrow white-clad shoulder, while the other bore a large spade which swung wearily at the end of his long arm. They passed in front of the house making their way silently toward a dimly outlined shed near a clump of dark pines. A bat swooped jerkily from the



shadows and whirled near their two lowered heads as they neared the shed and the younger boy hesitated slightly in his step allowing the other to enter first.

When they had put the implements away, the boys slowly returned to the house. At the front door the older said in a subdued tone, "Dark the house is, ain't it . . .?" When the other offered no reply he went on, "Don't mother always light the lamp around this time?" And he gradually turned his head toward his brother.

"Reckon . . . she do," came the unsteady reply. "But, Tom,—don't let's go in now. 'Twould be better if we waited out here for—Papa, don't you think?" And he touched the taller one's arm.

So they sat down on the steps close together, while night gradually sank to earth and drifted stealthily about them. Already birds sang no more, though crickets chirped from across the road. For a long time they remained silent and motionless except for Tom's bending over and pinching, unseeing, at blades of wet grass.

Then Tom spoke again. "The night's kind of calm and soft like," he said in a quiet voice. "They'll be the moon in a little time now. Papa'll like as not come in a city auto. . ."

"Do you think he will?" asked the other in a far away, though slightly eager, tone. "Do you think he'll be sorry for the way he treated us an'—Mother?" Then suddenly his small body stiffened in the darkness and he added sobbingly, "I hate Papa, Tom. Oh Tom, I hope he never comes back!"

"Sure . . . sure, Eldred, he'll be sorry. No, you mustn't be that way, a worry'n and afeered." In that moment a great sense of responsibility came over Tom and, as he put a light hand on his brother's shoulder, his emotions fled far beyond his few years. But as he looked

at the thin figure huddled beside him, his mind brought glimpses of the years past that they had suffered under the harsh treatment of their father and words choked back in his throat . . . They had worked in the baked earth of the garden, tramped burning hay high in the hayrack for hours—worked from sun to sun till their slim arms ached numbly and young backs cramped. In the heavy summer heat and after the great North wind came down from cold hills and bared the trees, they did all the chores. Side by side they had driven old Ben over frozen ruts in the dead of winter. Fifteen miles to Orff's Corner to purchase the meagre supplies, two ill-clad figures huddling on the cold wooden wagon. And nights, when Eldred slumbered tiredly by his side in the old bed up-stairs, Tom had often heard the voices of his father and mother, the one harsh and loud, the other almost indiscernibly sobbing, and his heart had raced with that bewildered frightened emotion that is harbored in the breasts of the young when they do not understand but know by instinct that something is wrong. And the brothers had lived on, working together day after day, dumbly accepting the dreary misery. Then suddenly the father had left the three and had gone away to the city "where folks dressed well and looks like something—and is something" he had said. That was three years ago.

As he sat on the low steps, Tom wanted words to reassure his brother. He felt somehow that he should almost tell Eldred not to hate their father, but he could only hold the bony shoulders tighter with his thin taut arm. Yes, he could forgive Papa for the way he'd treated them, but Mother—no, he could not forgive him for that. Poor Mother quietly waiting back there in the cool dark. She was the only kind light in their unhappy lives. She saved round cookies for them



and put them in a bag so they would not go hungry on the long ride to town. Once, on a very hot day, she hid the axe so that Tom would not have to chop wood for the kitchen stove. And always, when she thought them asleep at night, she would creak softly up the wooden stairs and open their door quietly but she would not come in for fear of waking them and only stood there very still. Then after a time the door would close again.

Tom's staring eyes became a little blurred and he gripped the wet sill of the steps with his hand.

A yellow three-quarter moon slid slowly out of Clary's Hill. Its pale light tinged the tree-tops and washed along the old mill road and blue-black shadows crept out of the dark sombre elms to where they sat. Eldred turned to his brother pleadingly, "Wonder what he'll do when he sees us, and, Tom, he couldn't hit me for nothin'—you wouldn't let him would you, Tom?"

"You mustn't be afeared," interrupted the other almost loudly. "No, I wonder—"

"What, Tom?"

"I wonder what he'll do when he sees Mother," he went on in a slow hushed tone.

On the wisp of air that momentarily rustled the quiet came the low hollow call of an owl from the sleeping loneliness. Eldred shuddered. "Tom, I be afeared. But, Tom, it isn't Papa. Lets us go down in the field. It's not so dark there . . . please Tom!"

"Look . . . look at the moon there, Eldred," said Tom, suddenly lifting his head. "Do you remember when in bed, and it were just coming up yonder, I used to tell you it were a big red cookie God had baked hisself in the sun's fire, afore he put it out. And Eldred, you believed me . . ."

The younger one looked up too and after a time he

said, "I remember, Tom. Is every moon the same moon, Tom . . . is this the same moon that 'twas then?"

Tom felt his throat shrink, and, taking his arm from Eldred's shoulder, he turned a little away. With great pain he finally spoke in a strained voice, "Sure . . . 'tis the same moon."

Though it was only the middle of autumn, the heat had fled from the ground into the night, and, because they sat very still, the cold, combined with the heavy dew, seeped along their fleshless bones. Both figures in the shadows shivered a little but they said nothing for a while and only sat there close together in the quiet gloom. For indeed, although the hills roundabout and the field across the road were covered with the soft light of a brighter but diminished moon and blended harmoniously with night and sky, over the house hung a dark melancholy that was foreboding and silent as the dead.

Suddenly Eldred sat up. "I heered something!" he said, with terror in his voice, and the face he turned towards Tom being no longer in the shadows was wide-eyed and ghostly white. His sudden actions startled the other who rose and stepped out into the light patch of grass where his brother stood. Together they listened for a space, but there was only quiet.

"What kind of a sound was it?" asked Tom in a low voice so that he might hear even as he spoke.

Eldred still trembling as he peered into the pale dark with his brother, breathed hard and whispered, "It come from down the road a piece. It sounded like maybe something—I don't know but I heered it, Tom, I heered it!" He was close at the other's shoulder.

"Hark!"

Then it came again, very distinct for a moment. The hollow "clump . . . clump" of footfalls on wood. Someone had crossed the old bridge a ways down the



road and was approaching the house. Eldred clutched Tom's arm tightly and he became conscious of the cold moisture of the grass through his worn shoes.

After a short space of time, a third figure appeared silently in the clearing and with some difficulty made its way slowly up toward the boys. It was a tall shape, dressed darkly, and moved casting a great stooped shadow, as a shadow of a man walking to the death. Apparently the figure was not aware of the boys until it was very near.

The moon passed under a heavy cloud and a sudden deep blackness settled over the three. Eldred shrank back, but, though the other brother stiffened, he remained stolidly there and spoke not a word.

Then a voice said, "Tom . . . Eldred, boys, it's your Papa. Boys?" Somehow it was not the harsh voice they expected. Instead it was a worn sad tone and it quivered oddly. This tone, added to his suffering and bitter loneliness of heart, nearly pierced Tom's plan of accepting his father. But, thinking again of his mother, he took a step forward and held his lips tightly shut.

"Boys—Don't you know . . . won't you say . . . Tom? Tommy?" The voice seemed strangled, and the father reached out a hand toward the boy, mutely. Finally he continued, "Where's Emma—Mother?"

Then Tom spoke, a strained voice but firm, "You ain't agoin' to bother Mother none! You ain't . . . you can't."

"Oh no. No, Tom, boy. Is she inside?"

The moon pushed out of the clouds and its solid light struck the man. Suddenly Eldred blurted out. "You're old . . .!" And the tall shape bent a little and turned away.

It was so cool and quiet out and the sky was so far, so great, and Tom, looking at the stooped shoulders of

the man who was his father, thought somehow of long back when his mother had read from a little black book to him one warm evening. It spoke of pity and a God—something that he did not then understand but he had felt the strength of it through his mother sitting by the window in the deep glow of the sunset. But she had suffered, suffered for years because of the cruelty of that man, and, though tears seared his face, he said sobbingly, "Me and Eldred, I guess'll stay here . . . Mother's . . . out back."

The father raised his head to his two sons for a long moment and he understood. Then he said bitterly, "All right boys. I guess I see. Maybe Mother will forgive a little . . ." And he moved slowly into the shadows to disappear behind the house.

Finally the two in the moonlight heard a voice calling. It sounded musty and old and shivered on the quiet. "Emma . . . Emma . . .!" It came. From the trees roundabout a whispered incoherent echo repeated the name. Then the voice ceased, and Tom, impelled by a power that spoke from the field, from the slumbering woods and hills, even from the dark little house, put his hand in that of the younger brother and went noiselessly in the direction the father had taken. For both knew that he had found in the shadows, the grave they had dug together that afternoon.



## FROM FAR PLACES

MAXEDA HESS

I have come from far places,  
following the song of great rivers;  
weaving a blood-moon into the  
grey-silk drop of a western sky;  
counting gold sun-discs,  
coined in the East  
on clear distilled dawns.

I have come from far places,  
tracing the horizon-edge of mountain ranges,  
hearing cello-sounds of gold nasturtiums  
on drowsy afternoons, and cricket-chants  
in the Night's Symphony.

I have come from far places,  
walking on the long shadows of small men,  
forgetting how many scars ago  
it was . . . I lost the one of my selves  
I most respected. . . . .

I have come from far places,  
to touch the garment of Christ  
in the quiet beauty of the fields.

## MOST GIRLS CAN'T

MARIAN MORROW

" . . . gee, isn't it a wonderful night!"

"Uhuh. Yeah, sure . . . Ya' know, I can't decide whether to go out for crew and get my letter, or go in for boxing, just for the fun of it . . . you don't get letters in boxing you know. But I love it, see? I can give it and I can take it, too. Every fellow can't say that . . . that he likes taking a chance of getting his face smashed in, just for a chance to paste the other guy. But I can take it."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah! But boxing takes such a lot of time, and if I do go in for it, that'll let the crew letter idea out entirely."

"You like crew a lot then, too?"

"No I don't. Oh it's all right, but . . . I'm not so good in *that*, understand. Ya' see, I don't know the technique. 'Course I could learn that pretty quick, and one advantage, I'm a lot stronger than any men they got now, I mean I could really dig that oar in."

"Really?"

"Sure! But gosh, I hate to give up fighting. If I was just sure I could get a couple scraps, I wouldn't hesitate."

"Why give it up then? Why go out for something you don't care about just for a letter? What'll you do with it after you get it, anyway? After all, sports are for *sport* . . . the main thing is to enjoy them, I think."

"Oh sure, but there's something about going home with your letters, ya' know . . . makin' good, an all that. But why am I telling you all this stuff? Bet you think I sure am conceited, don't you?"

"Why I . . ."



"Well I'm not . . . not a bit. Sa-ay, look up like that again. Gee you're a cute kid, ya' know it? An' I guess I ought to know. I've seen a few."

"Yes, I can see that. Don't you ever get tired of being so . . . awfully popular?"

"Oh, I don't know . . . but let's talk about you. What things are you interested in? What sports, for instance?"

"Well, I do quite a lot of . . ."

"Ya' see, the thing with me is, that they sort of expect things of me at home this year . . . not only the family, you understand, but a lot of friends. I was sort of a big shot in high school."

"I can imagine."

"Yeah, an' they all expect me to keep on with the things I'm good in, see? Get some letters, and make teams, an' all that."

"Well I think they surely. . ."

"There's one man in particular that sure is interested in me. He got me a football scholarship to And-over last year."

"You do everything, don't you? Why didn't you go?"

"Oh, my mom has some funny ideas. Why should I have to take the rough end for a scholarship, when we have enough money to send me, she says. But this man I'm telling you about . . . I used to go around quite a bit with his daughter, and he took to me for some reason or other. I never go to see her any more. She's still sort of nuts about me, I guess."

"I can understand that."

"But I go to see her old man a lot. He's the man that got the professional boxer interested in me. I told you about him, didn't I?"

"Why, I guess . . ."

"I haven't? Well, he was a real fighter, what I

mean! He sure taught me a lot. Ya' see, I knew everything about boxing, but nothin' at all about fighting, ya' see what I mean? Well this fellow did plenty. Boy that first time I sparred with him, he sure lambasted me. Then I got a couple hard and fast ones in . . . and I mean hard. Sort of gave him a new slant on me. We worked a lot together after that."

"I suppose you could knock him out before you got through training, couldn't you?"

"Oh, I dunno . . . maybe, maybe not. Remember, he was *good*. I know one thing though. I never really let myself go in those practice bouts."

"Really?"

"No. I was in stiff training, ya' see, and I got strong as an ox. He was a little shorter than I was, and I didn't want to take any chances of hurting him bad. I guess he didn't let out entirely on me either."

"That was awfully *thoughtful* of you!"

"One day he comes in and tells me he's signed me for a professional preliminary bout. I liked the idea fine . . . thought it'd be sorta nice fooling around here and there, with professional stuff. Gee, we sure trained hard for that bout!"

"Did you win?"

"No-o. You see, my mother was opposed . . . so I gave it up . . . for her."

"How considerate of you. But you did decide to go into the ring eventually, didn't you?"

"Oh no . . . don't get me wrong. I like other things besides boxing. . . that's no thing to go into for a profession, I say. I'm not like these ordinary small-time punch drunk pugilists that can't see anything but a punching bag. You might not think so, but I like artistic things too. I'm crazy about nature, for instance, and literature an', oh I don't know, but there are plenty of things I'm interested in besides boxing."



"Why of course you are. Anyone could tell that you have a good mind."

"No kidding?"

"Why I don't think I *could* kid you."

"Well, not so easy at that, I guess. Say, do you ever think of philosophy?"

"Yes, I . . ."

"You know that's one thing I'd like to know more about. You know, read up, study different kinds and everything. Did I ever tell you that I've worked out a sort of philosophy of my own? You see this is my theory. . ."

"I'm awfully sorry, Clyde, but I've got to go in . . . this is a 10:30 night, you know. I hate to miss it. I know it must be . . . *good*."

"Lord, is it 10:30 already? Gosh I ought to have been home at ten . . . got a theme to write. But gee, I've had a swell time tonight . . . I really have. You know, a lot of fellows don't think they can have a good time unless they're always ha-cha-cha-ing around. You know what I mean . . . taking every thing in . . . wisecracking . . . dizzy girls. Oh, I like to cut up myself sometimes, but not everlastingly. Mostly, I'd rather be with someone that has some sense . . . someone that can really *talk*. That's what I like about you, Vera . . . you can talk intelligently to a man! Most girls can't . . . it's a fact. Well, see you around. Sure enjoyed our talk."

## POETS AND CONQUERORS

JIM HOLDEN

A chilly wind from the north howled and whined around the cornices of Pompey's Theatre. It lifted Catullus's mantle and whistled away southward. He wrapped the folds of his garment closer about him and stood leaning against the sturdy pillars of the gate.

Light mists floated in from the Mediterranean and gently settled. A pale moon, through webs of gossamer, flooded the streets with spectral light. Chariot wheels had ground the bricks of the roadway into powder. In the days of Marius these chariots bore soldiers who cursed and killed until the streets ran with blood. Only last week Catullus saw Caesar pass in triumph. He rode in a specially constructed carriage. Jewels gleamed from his hands. Catullus noticed his hands particularly. They were small and white, with long, tapering fingers. Strange, he mused, that this man with girlish hands and gentle voice was virtually ruler of the world.

Yesterday this Theatre had echoed with the shouts of gladiators and the cries of wounded men. Pompey had presented another mammoth spectacle. But Catullus had been visiting Lesbia.

Remembering her, his shoulders drooped. A weary smile touched his lips and quickly disappeared. It mattered nothing that he was a popular poet, that all Rome read his lyrics, now she had left him. He closed his eyes and pictured her in his mind. She was tall, her figure one lithesome sleepy curve, a willow bending backward in the breeze, yielding. Men were as necessary to Lesbia as three meals a day, but Catullus never dreamed she'd find her way back to the estab-



lishment which roared behind the ninth pillar of the temple, shrine of Castor and Pollux. He had grown weary of slaying her lovers. They sprang up overnight like mushrooms.

Yesterday he forgot them completely. Its memory stirred him. Locking his arm about a pillar, he gazed into the night. Crushed flowers littered the floor. Lesbia's breathing, deep and labored, rose in gasps which shook her body like a leaf, quivering in the wind.

"She is gone, Catullus, I tell you," he said to himself, gone. You fool, brace up, say to yourself you do not love her. This afternoon you went to see her and she had gone."

"How can you love her?" he mused, "when she has gone to live behind the temple like any common courtesan?" Dejected, he gazed at the stars. Their brilliance and magnitude appalled him and gave him courage. He would tear himself loose and live again. His pen would cease dripping love lyrics. Once again it would splatter his enemies with vitriol. He'd have another go at Gellius and his debaucheries, and he'd satirize Asinius and his son who stole clothing at the baths. Yes, he would live. Taking a deep breath and squaring his shoulders, he strode off down the street. He passed the Forum. Crowds lingered about it, talking loudly. He hurried on until he reached a quiet street. Then he remembered Ipthsala. She was good company and would try her best to cheer him up. His step quickened. Her house was only five blocks away and she'd surely be there at this hour.

Ipthsala lived in a little home just off the Appian Way. It had only two rooms, a boudoir, and a larger chamber, partially open above, which contained a small varicolored tile bath, a corner where the servants cooked and prepared the food, and a number of cushions whereon guests and hostess might recline.

Tonight Ipthsala was seated by a small table. A servant combed her soft, black curls, while she gazed into a copper mirror and dabbed perfume on the lobes of her tiny ears. She reddened her lips with carmine, moistening them with her tongue. Then she rose and wrapped herself in fold after fold of clinging silk. Hearing a commotion at the door, she patted a stray curl into place and left the room.

Two men were outside. She hastened to greet them, her eyes shining. "You do me signal honor to come to my dwelling Caesar. I am happy to see you again."

Julius Caesar smiled a thin, tight-lipped smile. His eyes gazed through the girl, compelling her. "This is Mamurra, my friend."

Ipthsala smiled her greeting.

Mamurra, a dapper Spaniard of medium height, opened his mouth in a flashing white-toothed grin, then gazed at Caesar, nodding gayly. The great Roman was silent.

"What do you wish, Caesar? I am yours to command."

"Then I order you to prepare a meal for us. Let there be wine and songs. You shall dance for us, and later, perhaps, we shall"—here Caesar stepped to her side, and bending over whispered something in her ear. Ipthsala agreed eagerly and fluttering to the door like a wild bird, called her servants.

An hour later all three were reclining leisurely, nibbling the dainty fruits and figs a Nubian servant had placed before them. Ipthsala sat between the two men, her hand resting casually on Caesar's knee. This annoyed Mamurra, who edged closer, and pressing against her side, breathed her perfume, lips touching her ear.

"Pompey presented another spectacle at the amphitheatre this afternoon," said Caesar, spitting out a fig



seed, "three hundred gladiators, over a hundred combats. He is gaining in favor with the people. Already the Senate is prejudiced in his favor. He pleases the wealthy landowners for he is one of them and—besides—the common people enjoy these spectacles. I spend liberally to keep in the running. I must outdo him on the next feast day."

Mamurra grinned unctiously, his hand caressing the girl's neck. "Darling," he murmured, "Darling."

Caesar smiled and, folding his hands, dreamed of the future. He would gain the confidence of the people, he thought, then some day when they least expected it, he would overthrow Pompey and force the Senate to make him Emperor. His eyes gleamed shrewdly. He spoke aloud, "Perhaps my poet friend, Catullus, will write some lyrics about Pompey. A few of his biting lampoons and Rome will laugh in Pompey's face."

Ipthsala roused herself and, wriggling out of Mamurra's embrace, said, "Catullus is not happy. Lesbia has left him."

Mamurra smiled. "Lesbia," he observed, "is a very delectable person. I visited her near the temple of Castor Pollux last evening."

Ipthsala gazed at him scornfully, her blue eyes widening. "Lesbia is one of Rome's most beautiful women and one of her wickedest. It is said she poisons her lovers."

Caesar stroked the girl's arm. "You are right, my dear, Lesbia is too skillful. With her, love is an art, a finished performance, highly polished and superbly rendered. Its technique is appalling, so thorough one's imagination has no play."

"They tell me she has great influence with Catullus."

"Yes," said Caesar, "he loves her to the point of in-

sanity." "Ipthsala," he added, turning to the girl, "are you acquainted with our rising young poet?"

"Catullus comes here often. Poor dear, he is a tender and emotional whirlwind. Here one minute, rushing off to Lesbia the next."

Mamurra reddened slightly. "You like this poet, my dear? You say he is emotional? I, too, am emotional. I, too, am a whirlwind of love." The Spaniard fell forward, groveling in her lap.

Ipthsala gazed at Caesar, disgust in her eyes. Caesar raised his hand slightly and indicated Mamurra. The girl's hand lingered on his greasy black head, patting it as she might a dog's.

Caesar spoke again. "I shall call to see Lesbia. Perhaps she can enlist for us this rash fellow's services."

Ipthsala spoke timidly, "He may come here tonight, for he is lonely. When he returns to his villa he cannot sleep, so he visits me."

Mamurra's lips curled. He seized the girl's arm and jerked his head in the direction of her boudoir. They rose. Caesar sat wrapped in thought. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. It flew open and Catullus stood before them. Tall and straight, he stood gazing around the room much as a general might survey his battlefield.

"Hello, Catullus," said Ipthsala.

Caesar bowed, "Welcome, my friend, I have been hoping to see you. There are many things I would discuss at our leisure."

Mamurra was silent.

A Spaniard—Catullus looked at him with scornful amusement. "And who is this person?"

"This is Mamurra," said Caesar, "one of my generals."

"He has the look of a noble man and a brave soldier."



Mamurra scowled. He was not certain of this stranger, whose eyes shone with such a queer glint. He could not tell whether he were being praised or condemned. "Thank you," he answered.

The poet turned to the girl. "You are becoming popular my dear. A world conqueror and his Spanish general, hero of many a bitter encounter. Truly an enviable combination."

Caesar emitted a chuckle like the croak of a sick frog. "Your humor is keen, my friend. It sometimes stings."

"It is just," said the poet.

Mamurra eyed the girl covetously. Catullus watched him. Then suddenly, "You like beautiful women, Mamurra?"

The Spaniard laughed. "Yes," he replied, "yes," and winked at Ipthsala.

Catullus turned to Ipthsala, "You have found a devoted lover, tender as the young tree, and restrained. But beware of his kisses or you will be seared with those fangs of his."

Mamurra rose angrily. Caesar caught his arm. With an impatient gesture the Spaniard freed himself. "You are a fine one to talk of love while your mistress carouses behind the temple."

"My friend," sighed the poet, "you are losing your temper. Don't let me hinder you if you wish Ipthsala. Take her. Caesar and I will have a chat." They left the room, the girl's feet dragging wearily over the carpets.

Caesar spoke cautiously. "I saw Lesbia not many days ago. I do not believe she's happy."

"Her happiness, Caesar, has ceased to be any concern of mine."

"Come, come, my boy, you know you still love her."

"I shall always love her, but I cannot condone her actions. She is faithless and cruel."

"There are other girls at Castor Pollux; perhaps seeing you with them would make her jealous."

"'Been there lately?"

"Yesterday. You see, Mamurra and I go twice each week."

"You glutton!" cried the poet, "but your idea is good."

"By the way," asked Caesar, meditatively scratching his beak of a nose, "I understand Pompey's spectacle was well received?"

"I never attend them," said Catullus, "but the theatre was crowded. You two men should stop throwing bones to the public and start concentrating on good government. If that were the case, I should say 'let the best man win'."

"If Caesar were ruler over this Republic, he would know how to govern it."

"If many people were aware of Caesar's ambitious intention, his life would be short."

The conqueror laughed. "My rival, Pompey, is a peculiar man. His life is one long string of vices. I wonder I haven't read of him in your verses?"

"Ah, my friend, perhaps you shall—"

"Then you will—" Caesar's eagerness betrayed him.

"Not so fast, I have promised nothing."

Ipthsala slipped into the room followed by Mamurra. She was like a pale flower, trembling. The Spaniard's face was crumpled with fury.

"Damn this girl," he thundered, "she should be killed. Killed, I tell you. Where is my knife?"

Caesar smiled but said nothing.

Catullus assumed a benign expression. "Let this girl be publicly whipped, she has spurned Mamurra's love, a capital offense, my friends!"



Ipthsala smiled faintly. This was reassuring. "I am sorry," she said.

Mamurra glared and adjusted his wrap, leaving the house without a backward glance. Caesar hurried after, nodding absently to Catullus.

The poet walked over to the girl's side and, putting his arm about her, spoke soothingly. "There, there, my dear, we all have our troubles."

"I cannot afford to incur the anger of Caesar," said the girl.

"He is but a man, Ipthsala, although his name is bedecked with laurels, at bottom he is a struggling human like all of us."

Ipthsala managed a weak smile. "He doesn't come often. He prefers the louder, bawdier entertainments of the ninth pillar."

"Yes, I know. He and Mamurra are two of the filthiest beasts in the state."

"Not so loud. You speak treason."

"It is always treason to speak the truth. Pompey is a quiet man, although he has his faults. Compared to the lives of these two, his has been one of impeccable virtue."

"Are you a supporter of Pompey?"

"He is a landowner and so am I. Pompey's father and mine were close friends. He and I have reached an understanding. But let us change the subject. You are enticing this evening, wild and frightened. One likes to tame wild birds. Come here to me."

"It is not I you love, but Lesbia. Why do you not go to her? The hour is late, activities at the temple are waning."

"You tempt me, my child."

"It would do you no harm to see if she still loves you—"

Catullus seized the girl's shoulder. His face was

close to hers. "You know it is Lesbia I love, but tell me, why are you so anxious that I return to her? What have you heard? Tell me, child?"

"I dare not."

"Tell me," he commanded sternly. "Must I threaten you?"

She burst out crying. "Dear Catullus," she began, then faltered.

"Go on, go on, child."

"Tonight Caesar said Lesbia had great influence with you. The plans Caesar thinks of, he very soon carries out."

"Then you think he has gone to Lesbia. But why? He could very well wait until tomorrow."

"Waiting would not serve his purpose. Pompey's triumph is fresh in the minds of the people. He wishes to create a sweeping change of sentiment without a moment's delay."

"Did he tell you to warn me of this?"

"No, he often confides in me. Never before have I betrayed his trust."

"Tell me, who is this Mamurra?"

"He is a rake and a murderer," cried Ipthsala, her eyes flashing. "He killed Julia, the courtesan, because she would not go with him to be his slave. He is a crafty man and spoke of visiting Lesbia. It is likely Caesar will enlist her aid through him."

"I have heard enough," cried Catullus and, enveloping himself in his wrap, he left the house. It was about three hours until sun-up.

His fingers crept to the inner folds of his mantle. He smiled slightly and hurried toward the temple.

Lesbia stood gracefully in the doorway of the temple's ante-room. Despite the chilly weather, she was scantily clad in a diaphanous robe. The Spaniard, Mamurra, stood before her. His eyes drank in every



detail of the woman's body. Laughing, she tossed her head and lazily stretched like a lithe tigress.

Mamurra spoke softly. "Caesar sent me to see you. He wants you to influence Catullus to satirize Pompey and his spectacles. You must be quick. A market has been arranged for the verses."

Lesbia yawned daintily. "Poor Catullus, he suffers so for want of me."

"It will be worth your while to appease him," said the Spaniard, producing a purse filled with gold.

"Come inside. We can discuss the details at our leisure." The Spaniard followed her into a dimly lighted room. A couch, piled with silks and furs, stood in a corner. A single candle burned on a table near the far wall.

A tall figure stole to the door. It was not quite shut. He applied one eye to the crack. Voices floated out to him on the quiet night air. Lesbia was speaking. "I will do it. I shall arrange a meeting with Catullus tomorrow." Distinctly he heard the clink of money. The Spaniard spoke bitterly.

"Twice as much if you poison him. A few drops of hemlock in his wine and we shall be rid of him. After he has written these poems, mind you."

Lesbia's quiet voice answered, "No, that I will not do."

"Very well," said the Spaniard, rising to go, "I will return before long on a more pleasant errand."

Catullus backed against the wall, blending his form in its shadow. The Spaniard passed him. He saw those white teeth glistening in the moonlight. The poet's arm shot out and seized Mamurra's wrist. Mamurra swung silently.

Both men reached for their knives. Their arms rose simultaneously. Catullus ward off the Spaniard's

slashing blow with his forearm and, quick as light, plunged his blade to the hilt in Mamurra's breast.

The Spaniard fell forward, coughing blood. Bending over, Catullus carefully wiped his blade on Mamurra's robe and glided away into the darkness.

Shortly after noon on the day following, a messenger was ushered into the presence of Julius Caesar. He presented him with two rolls of parchment. Caesar's eyes flashed when he read the titles and recognized the handwriting of Catullus. He scanned the first line of one, "Mamurra now vamps maids in darkest halls of Hell." With a puzzled frown he opened the second, "I shall not raise my hand to please you, Caesar, nor do I care if you are white or black." His face purple with rage, he threw both messages vindictively into a corner. Then, clapping his hands, he summoned the soldiers of his guard. "Bring my litter," he commanded. In a moment the procession was off, winding its way to the Temple of Castor Pollux. Swords and helmets flashed in the brilliant sun. People turned and stared. Caesar was seldom in such a hurry.

Lesbia received him graciously. "Mamurra is dead," she said, "stabbed over the heart. My servants removed the body to his home."

"Catullus," cried Caesar, "I'll kill him."

"How did Catullus know of Mamurra's visit?" asked Lesbia, "even I was surprised at his coming."

Caesar was silent. At length he said slowly, "There is only one person who could have told him."

"Yes?"

"Iphsala," said the conqueror. He was calm as death.

Lesbia spoke quietly and unemotionally. "This girl must be put to death. She must die swiftly and horribly. In that way you will strike most effectively at Catullus. I shall take care of Catullus in the future."



He shall live to praise you, Caesar. I give you my word. He shall grovel at your feet."

Caesar stared at her for a moment. "Your counsel is wise, I am deeply grateful." Bowing low, he took his leave.

That night soldiers entered Ipthsala's home and seized her. They ripped off her clothing, led her to the outer room. A rough cross was soon erected. Lifting her, they draped her arms over the cross-bar. She was too frightened to speak. Huge spikes tore her tiny hands. Blood spurted and fell in cascades on the floor. Her body writhed. Quickly they nailed her feet to the base of the cross and stood looking on. Finally they departed. An hour passed. The girl's body stiffened, then relaxed.

Catullus received a caller early the next morning. It was Lesbia. Seeing her, his eyes flashed.

"Why have you come here?" he cried.

She ignored his question, "You were a fool to kill Mamurra. Caesar is angry."

"Is he?" Catullus countered amiably. "I thought he would be."

"I persuaded him not to kill you," said Lesbia.

"How kind of you," replied the poet, bowing. "You have twice saved my life. Once by refusing to poison me, again by staving off Caesar. I am doubly grateful."

Lesbia shrugged her shoulders. Removing her outer robe she folded it carefully and placed it on a marble bench. Catullus marveled at the whiteness of her skin.

"I am tired," she said, "I will rest while I talk to you." Crossing the room, she reclined on a couch. Her garments rippled and swelled as she made herself comfortable. Catullus could not take his eyes off her. The smell of her perfume was everywhere. A wave of his hand would bring a servant with flowers. Cross-

ing the room he took her in his arms and kissed her many times.

She held his eyes. "How many of my kisses, dear Catullus, are enough and more than enough for you?"

"As many as there are sands in the Libyan desert," he cried, falling to his knees at her side. Lesbia's fingers ran through his hair and lingered on his cheek.

"I think you were wrong about Caesar, dear, you must apologize to him for your verses."

Catullus started angrily and half rose to his feet.

"I love you so," she murmured dreamily, stretching her arms toward him. He hesitated, then fell into her embrace.

"It is all that matters," he whispered.





## BLACK JUSTICE

JOHN BILLS

THE rider plunged his horse into the swollen waters of the Kissimmee. The rawhide thongs of the hurricane that had struck six hours before still whipped and twisted the tall pines. But the man laughed, his tracks were blown away, washed out, covered. Not even bloodhounds could follow him. Yet it was best to be safe; certainly the river would leave no scent. Three miles down stream, his spur raked the horse's side and the weak brute struggled up the opposite bank.

"Give 'em th' slip thet time," the rider mumbled, again rasping the panting belly of his mount. "We'll git inter thet hammock thar, cook some o' this here sow-belly an' have a night's sleep." The horse whinnied low.

Back in Wabasso on the Manatee signs had been posted. Rewards would be paid for the body of Jim Drake, "alive or dead." A sheriff's posse had followed his trail, pressed him hard. Then the terrific storm from the west with a noon-day night and a cataract of drenching water for six hours the storm raged and Drake reached the Kissimmee.

And back in Wabasso the body of Peter Sutton had been buried in the little cemetery which overlooked the river. A community was in mourning; "Dad" Sutton, their banker, had been murdered. His money and the money of his neighbors was gone. His house was on the outskirts of the little town and none had heard the victim's cries.

Also back in Wabasso was a broken young negress who had been Sutton's cook. Drake had robbed both master and maid in different ways. Sally's husband,

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JOHN BILLS

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Big Jeff Washington, was working in a distant town. He had never seen Drake and did not know of Sally's terrible experience until she came to him, sobbing, three days later.

"We all mus' get away, Sally," he said. "We mus' go to Jax whare yo' sister at."

In a little shack in Jax that Jeff had built for her, Sally lay on a cot. "The doctor man say the baby may come tomorrer or nex' day" said Jeff, pacing the floor.

When Big Jeff scowled, strangers jumped. When he bellowed at them their knees shook. But his heart was that of a docile elephant. Had he come face to face with the man who had despoiled Sally, he would probably have quivered with mingled anger and fear, but the fear would have ruled him.

"Tell me again, Sally, what did the man look like?"

"He were a big, rough man, Jeff. O' course not so big an' strong as you, honey." She looked at him lovingly. "An' he has long black hair and whiskers. An' when he smiles he has two big yellow teeth an' one sort o' slid down over his lower lip."

Three days later Nancy was born and Sally died. They buried her in the negro churchyard by the St. John's at Jax. The choir sang:

"Rise up, Israel, rise up on de judgement day."

Jeff walked stupidly back to his shack. Nancy cried and he loved her.

\* \* \* \*

Forty miles from the Kissimmee in that September, 1872, twenty odd families grazed their herds over the broad flats of the St. John's and through the lush hammocks of Geneva. There were little groves here and there and small gardens along the muck holes. Except for the clearings the forest was virgin, neither saw nor turpentine rasp having marred it. Some thirty



shacks about the paintless church at Snow Hill housed the negro population.

Five miles to the west of Geneva the St. John's had widened into a great slough known as Lake Jessup. At its southern edge ran a creek, its banks lined by mighty oaks. The sun was already sinking when Drake forded the stream. He seemed familiar with the territory, cursed approvingly and rode down the line of trees. A venerable oak caught his eye; in a great hole in its scarred side he cached his loot.

Old Dan Prevatt and his three sons had come in from the woods, finished their chores and were about to sit down at the hand-hewn, deal table when the rider entered their clearing. "Come in and have a bite a supper," bellowed Old Dan hospitably as the stranger dismounted at the door. "Ain't got much t' eat but Ma kin make old bull taste like venison an' we got ol' bull."

The stranger said "Thank yuh, friend, I be pow'ful' hungry". He introduced himself as Duke and proceeded to empty two plates of Ma's ol' bull and candied yams. "Moughty fine co'n pone," he gulped as he reached for a third chunk.

Dan Prevatt and his family did not like Drake but the hospitality of the outlands assumes all strangers worthy of bed and board. So for five days Drake was their guest, leaving early in the morning to ride the timber lands and returning for supper and the bunk assigned to him by the fireplace. No questions were asked as to his business and no information was volunteered.

On the fifth night Drake said, "Moughty fine country yuh has got here; lots a' fine timber. I'm a timber man; jest tuk up gov'ment grant of twenty-five thousand acres west of heah, round Lake Jessup. Goin' on

to Jacksonville in th' mornin' to make final payment an' git th' patents from the gov'ment."

"Will yuh be back soon?" Old Dan asked.

Drake filled his pipe before answering. "Yah, mister, I'm plannin' to come back down the St. John's with a flat boat and loggin' an' millin' machinery. I'll be bringin' some niggers an' puttin' up a settlement over thar at Clark's Landin'. I'll soon have things a hummin'."

The Prevatt boys glanced quickly at their father, Old Dan's heart was thumping like his horses' hoof beats on a clay road but his face was as calm as the grey mists which hung over his clearing on a winter morning. Before daybreak Drake was on his way; he wanted none to see him when he stopped at the great oak.

\* \* \* \*

Fifteen years had passed since the fires began to blaze under the boilers of the saw mill at Clark's Landing. In the short Florida twilight Drake sat on the porch of his house and watched the mill closing. The men were hurrying to finish their work and get to their shacks or the mess hall for supper. Drake was half drunk and surly. His funds were running low; the operation had not been a success. He had driven his men until those from Geneva had left him; those brought down from Jacksonville became sulky and the best disappeared after each pay day. His machinery had mysteriously broken down, and he was unable to place the blame. His woods crews shirked; they mixed too freely with the townspeople. He returned to the kitchen and poured another stiff drink.

Big Jeff Washington shambled down the sand trail in front of Drake's house. The whites of his eyes shone under shaggy brows. He had been imported from Jax



only a week before; promises of big pay which might send Nancy back to school had induced him to try the mill for a time. Of course he should not have brought the girl with him, but there was no other place for her . . . and they had been constant companions for fifteen years.

Jeff had feared and hated Drake from the time the river boat landed at the dock and the "Big Boss" was pointed out to him. Drake was smooth shaven and his hair was white. But there was a fierce brutishness about him which scared Jeff; and he grinned, two yellow teeth showed and one of them slid down over his lower lip. Instinctively he felt that Nancy, his rose, was in danger.

So Big Jeff sulked by on the far side of the sand trail and was glad that the boss had gone back into the kitchen. He hastened on toward the mill where he still had work to do. But before Jeff reached the mill, Drake slipped out the back door of his place and sneaked down into the negro quarters. Nancy was washing the supper dishes, singing softly.

Why Jeff turned back he never knew. In fact he had thought he was on his way to the mill when he suddenly realized that he was in front of his own shack and heard Nancy's smothered, terrified cries. The door was locked; the one window and back door was barred. Frantically he pounded. Drake hurled a curse at him, and Big Jeff knew. He put his great shoulder against the door and it gave. He drew back for a terrific plunge when a pistol shot came from within. The ball splintered the door at his ear. Big Jeff was scared; he ran, not knowing where he was going. When he regained his senses he was finishing up his work at the mill. Meantime Drake had let himself out the back door and gone home. When Jeff re-

turned he found the shack dark and Nancy sobbing on the little cot. He tried to comfort her clumsily.

A week later Jeff was plodding home through the negro colony on Snow Hill. The sounds of early evening service came from the weather beaten church. They were singing the song that Jeff loved—

"Rise up Israel, Rise up on de Judgement Day."

His great muscles quivering, his heart aching, he entered the church and slid into a back seat.

The song died and the minister opened the big Bible. "My text, brethren and sistern, is from Exodus. It is in chapter 21 where de Lawd give his orders to the Children of Israel."

Jeff heard as from a great distance; only now and then did the words reach his consciousness.

"... a eye foah a eye an' a tooth foah a tooth. . ."

"A tooth foah a . . ." What was it in his mind about a tooth? He would like to knock Drake's big teeth down his throat. That big yellow one that slid down over his lower lip when he grinned. "An when he grinned he had two big yellow teeth . . ." Out of the fog of his memory a picture was forming. "An' one sort o' slid down over his lower lip."

The fog blew away. Sally lay on the cot and Nancy was coming. Jeff remembered.

"... an a wound foah a wound . . ." the minister droned on.

Jeff jumped to his feet and rushed from the church. He started running, running toward the mill, to the shack where Nancy would be and maybe . . . "A wound foah a wound," he muttered.

Drake was coming out the back door of Jeff's shack cursing. He had waited for Nancy, but she had fooled him. Then from the darkness a sledgehammer blow landed on his chin and he slumped to the ground.

"... wound foah a wound" Jeff mumbled dragging



the helpless Drake to the banks of the river. A swaying, slender figure followed.

The moon appeared through broken cloud banks. The swaying figure with the yellow rose-like face clutched a knife with slender fingers. Drake was still groggy, but he saw the girl's face and cried out in terror.

There was a canoe on the shore. Jeff threw Drake on the sand beside it. He put one great knee on his chest and pinned him to the ground, panting. Then he turned to the girl, "A wound foah a wound, Nancy," he rumbled. "He spoilt Sally and . . ."

Five minutes later he tossed Drake's moaning form into the forest. He expanded his great lungs and sang "Rise up Israel, Rise up on de Judgement Day."



## CHAUCEER, WHO EXHALED THE ENGLISH SPIRIT

CARROLL COONEY

Geoffrey Chaucer was born with the usual proceedings about the middle of the 14th century — (Scholars are wont to agree that the precise date was 1340—but whenever Scholars assemble and agree on a thing, I generally smell a rat, and I do not exaggerate when I say that our Geoffrey was well acquainted with every species of rat in his filthy birth-place near the London docks.)

Amazingly enough, Chaucer also died, as is the stupid custom of the human race, but not before he had filled his chubby belly with quantities of wine, experienced the bubonic plague, been robbed, been arrested, sued, and had written numerous badly-spelled works. With the possible exception of the *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Cressida* and a few poems voicing his distress in later life, his writings could be tied to a heavy rock and tossed into the Sargossa Sea without moving me to bite my fingernails and shed painful tears.

It must be said, however, that Geoffrey was the first man to organize and tabulate words that make up what is known today as the English language. Now I do not commit myself by saying that the organization of any language is a thing of any particular credit to any person or persons, for beasts, who are the most profound of all living things employ no speech save for a few guttural monosyllables, and it seems rather uncalled-for that all languages are for the most part only a means of putting on paper the stupid and the physical things which we attribute to beasts themselves. Now to return to Chaucer (I was hoping you had forgotten him completely).

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Though Chaucer lived in a time when Maniacs reigned on thrones, and there was blood oozing everywhere, Black Death, Peasants revolting, cities burning, two Popes reigning at once—insanity and turmoil . . . though all this was going on, Chaucer absolutely ignored it in his writings.

He was a soldier, ambassador, business man, magistrate, court officer, member of parliament, player of hop-the-frog and minor league base-ball. He also wrote without the aid of a typewriter.

*Troilus and Cressida* is a long-stretched but simple love yarn which offers no satire, philosophy, word beauty, has little historical value—or any of those things the wherewithal, we insist stubbornly, considerably better our meagre minds. It is a story having its origin oddly enough in the travails of one dabbler with words, Homer, who gave the ball of epic literature a push, and all the GREAT MEN who have since then fooled with ink have been booting it ever since. Benoit de Sainte-Maure, Guido Colonna, Boccaccio, Lydgate, Henryson, Dryden, (I trust you know all of these as well as I do) Gornot, Shakespeare, and last but not least, Chaucer—all have dealt with this business of *Troilus and Cressida* in one form or another and many in both. Frankly I can see little or no reason for reading it other than for what little amusement (probably unintentional on the part of the author) it affords me in the fairly side-splitting Pandarus (added to Boccaccio's version by Chaucer) the love, and the mildly exciting—very mildly—action. Perhaps I don't understand it, but to do so, I refuse blankly to transport myself back into Chaucer's day and view it through the eyes of his people. My day and times are bad enough. How often do we hear "To fully appreciate—it is necessary for you to study the thought of the times, the author's background"—in this way giving

the men of old twice the credit they deserve. If you follow the above saying, then even this atrocious work of mine becomes worthwhile.

So much for *Troilus* and his fiery love *Cressida* (which you most certainly think is nothing at all, but as my babbling summary strikes you to be flat and nothing whatsoever—So did this yarn of Chaucer's strike me, and we are back at the begend ('begend'—my masterpiece of a word formed from the two words we use which mean the same thing: "Beginning" and "End".)

With little more ado, I shall proceed to elucidate the best known of Chaucer's works—namely, the *Canterbury Tales*, a score of yarns patterned after the style of Boccaccio, not only in that the Tales are related each supposedly by a different person in a gathering of story-tellers from all walks of life, but also not few of them are taken directly from the Decameron, plot, situation, outcome and all. Having paused at the Tabard (A delightful old word . . . meaning . . . yes yes,, a delightful old word) whilst he were on the roade to Canterburie fer to seek the "Holy blissful Martyr" (who seemeth to be rather adept at hiding) well, he found at the Tabard nine and twenty sundry folk, Nuns, Millers, Reeve, Knight, Clerk, Plowman and many more. All these tell of that which interesting and fit to hear are to the others. The tales are simple and for the most part dry as the west wind on the desert.

The *Knight's Tale*—the longest and worst of them all—gives the gasping reader a feeling that he is struggling through a sea of glue dragging eighteen hippotami whilst a 100 mile gale blows sand and sediment into his face. Even in our English of today (a language par excellence) the *Knight's Tale* would be little more interesting than any other tales of old with which I don't mind saying I am considerably fed up. (I take



the liberty to pause and say that I think that the greatness, the depth, the beauty and all the other things we instinctively—instinctively because it has been pounded, banged, squeezed into our forefathers for centuries—attribute to the Greeks and other olden-time races, is for the most part a lot of perverted foolishness). I advise every one of you to read the *Knight's Tale*.

Then there are others, some fairly good others, bright in spots but dull in general. Amusing: when Chaucer attempts to relate his own *Pardoner's Tale*. Interesting: Old words which we have lost; the excellent rhyming of many of the lines.

If one is intellectual to the point of possessing a good keen, hearty sense of humor . . . I recommend the *Miller's Tale* and the *Reeve's Tale*. Lusty, bawdy, rare, uproariously funny—in my light opinion, by far the best of them all. If Chaucer had any head on him, he wrote all the others just to prepare you for stories of this sort. Hopelessly discouraged with it all . . . I came unawares on the Miller and fairly burst my insides.


In conclusion I merely wish to say that there are no two better friends in the whole world than Geoffrey Chaucer and I—furthermore, I would do anything in the world for him except read his complete works again—and feeling for me the way he does, with consideration for my patience and brilliance, I am sure that he would not ask me to do it any more than I ask you to read this poor imitation of a false reflection of something far beyond my scope.

## "BLACK DRUMS"

MAXEDA HESS

**D**EATH-BONES pounding out a quick tattoo,  
Devil-music beating up a black hoo-doo,  
Dance of the witch-men, rattling bleached  
skulls,  
Blood of virgin maidens, dance of warring bulls,  
Hot is the young blood, full and strong-running,  
The throats of the drums are loud with the  
humming  
Of black men conjuring voo-doo chants  
To the gleam of bodies in a devil-dance,  
Congo drums sing in the bush this night,  
For Africans lust for the blood of the white.





# BOOKS

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### BOOKS

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FULFILLMENT

DOROTHY PARMLEY

I should grow old beautifully  
Like a white wing when the moth dies.  
If, one day, my tall sons came  
And smiled at me with your eyes.



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