

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 25 (1957)
Heft: 4

Artikel: Into this garden
Autor: Parke, L.E.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-568411>

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Into This Garden

by L. E. Parke

Come, Adonis. Lift your head slowly
from the cool hard rock beneath it
and look into my eyes,
with a smile understanding my desire.
Or close your eyes more tightly if you would,
and flicker them only a little as you feel my touch.
If you must acknowledge my presence too close beside you,
or my fevered, burning heart
beating too loud for you to feign sleep longer,
then wake, but gently,
and move almost imperceptibly:
I will know, and return you to yourself.

My blood runs quick in my veins
And my heart throbs with the imminent tragedy
of your withdrawal from me,
or the sting of your frown as you close the door
which I must enter to you.

As you lie there still and waiting,
pretending sleep and unawareness of me,
you must know there are so many parts of you
that will not let you lie to me.

Your hand, open in the grass beside you,
is electrically awake.

Your pulse throbs quick
along the tight, bronzed cords of your neck.
And where the warm white cloth
clings tight on your fast breathing,
there is too studied a rise and fall there—
too conscious a sensuousness
for innocence of me.

And where my fingers lie, timid and shivering,
the tight cloth beneath
sears them with a pulsating fire
which belies knowledge of my presence.

You know, as you lie so violently motionless,
how my blood burns in me.

My brain screams out my bottomless desire,
and I know that you hear.

You wait—

perhaps not to break the spell;
perhaps knowing, even as the snake knows,
poised to strike,
that the smallest move
will startle the bird to swift, desperate flight.
Or perhaps you wait thinking
this is the door

which two friends such as you and I
must pause before for a moment only
but not enter
and forget passing when we have walked on.
Yet I sense that you too know what lies beyond the door.
Perhaps you crossed this threshold once
too long ago for remembering,
and crossing it too soon,
were disillusioned and ran breathless away.
Or perhaps you have not yet stepped into this garden,
or looked in even briefly from without.
Perhaps you have heard of its forbidden fruits
from those who have never tasted them
and believed them poisonous.
Perhaps even now you shudder,
knowing that the key is turning in the lock
and unless you run fast and far away
before the door opens
you will be drawn inside
by some magic magnetism which attracts you
even as it repels you.
Perhaps you wait breathless and expectant,
though you know not what for
except from hearsay
or from crayon marks on walls and sidewalks
from which women turn blushing.
Or perhaps you wait only
as you have waited many times before—
for the last note of an overture
that ends as the curtain rises on a drama
which you have often played.
Even as you lie there motionless,
perhaps your blood runs quick
in anticipation of a new audience's ecstasy
— but you sense
that you must not betray your anticipation
lest the audience enjoy the denouement less
for knowing the play is not new.
Still I cannot see you
except as you show yourself to me.
And would not if I could
see you, through calculating, analyzing eyes
that would tear from around you
the cloth of mystery
which impels me to you relentlessly.
And if I shiver in anticipation of a violence
which may not be in you—
or thrill to the fear of a danger

which you could not hold for me,
it is as I would have it
and the moment is complete
and I must enjoy it most.
For fear and desire crouch hand in hand in this moment,
spellbound on the brink of the precipice—
impelled to leap headlong
into the valley of destruction,
yet held transfixed by the smallest but strongest thread.

Do not reassure me yet, my Adonis.
Let me live this moment of beauty to the fullest
and enjoy its tender brutality.
And when you cannot longer feign innocent sleep
and must waken under my touch,
stir once ever so softly first,
sending my heart racing to my mouth,
in sudden fear of your waking.

Yet I know that you are awake. You are violently awake.
There is electricity beneath my touch
and my hand trembles from it
as I am drawn nearer.

Now if ever, you must awake to me.
For if you wait the moment longer
there will be no going back.
If you would not share my magic, waken now.
There is still time, but barely.
For if you allow to pass this one second more
it will be too late:
Your power will be as nothing before mine
and I will know that you desire no power against me.
Your hand, lying open beside you now,
will close tight, but not with anger for me.
And this moment trespassed, I will no longer fear you.
Your blood will pound faster. Faster. Faster.
We will climb together to the peak of ecstasy
where I see you even now in my mind
and in that short, eternal moment before the heavens
when your eyes roll upward inside you
and your blood pounds unbearably,
and your breath fails,
I will hold you tight against the peak of the moment
and as your feet would leave the earth
in a spasm of flight,
I will crush you to me in
holy wonder of being God for a moment
on this high peak
where you have never been, perhaps,
until I led you here.

And when your wings beat the air no more,
and you lie cool and wet in the wake of the storm
that has passed,
awaken to me then—
and, if you would, tell me of your nightmare
and I will understand
and never bring you here again.

But if you waken slowly as from happy sleep,
with your eyes soft and rested,
and ask how we came here, and how we return—
as return we must —
Then, my Adonis, we will pass this way again.

A Piece of Silk

Gerry leaned on a wall overlooking Bombay. The shimmering heat made the city waver before his eyes. Before him he could see the great city spread out, with its white buildings, the bazar, and on the waterfront, that enormous arch of white marble which is the Gateway to India. His dark glasses were inadequate in the glaring sunshine, and he turned to a seat shaded by a huge palm; it was just the right place to relax until it was time to return to the city. Gerry loved this place where he stood by the Hanging Gardens, with their trimmed hedges, some of which were shaped like animals. They are on Malabar Hill, in the better quarter of Bombay, where most of the houses are large, and each has its own lovely garden.

He had been in Bombay for three weeks, and as he sat under the palm, the reluctant thought came to him that it was time to be moving on, possibly to Mombasa or some other African port. A month previously in London, on a very cold, wintry day, his thoughts had turned to ideas of lying in the sun, but not just ordinary sun. He wanted hot, tropical sunshine, such as India would provide. He had two reliable partners in his publishing business, with one of whom, Roger Marlow, he lived. He had not had a holiday for some time, so he booked a plane passage to Calcutta, and left the following day; within two days he stepped out under the scorching sun of the Far East. After six enjoyable days in Calcutta, he moved on to Bombay.

Today he felt that nothing could be better than to live in this wonderful city of heat and light. At the moment, the only discordant note was the sight of vultures over the nearby Parsee temple, on the roof of which the dead are placed at dawn, and their clean-picked bones are removed at dusk. He felt drowsy in the heat and slowly fell asleep. Then suddenly, he was wide awake, with an awareness that someone was near. At first he could see no-one, and then he noticed a youth of about eighteen or nineteen amongst the nearby shrubs. The youth was wearing the national costume which showed his shapely limbs under the twisted white cotton robe. He was walking along a path at a tangent to Gerry,