

5 The dead man lay alone and naked on a white cloth, surrounded by depressing white walls, in the cruel sobriety of a wide dissection room that seemed to shiver with the screams of an endless torture.

The light of noon bathed him and awakened the dead spots on his forehead; conjured up a bright green from his naked belly, bloating his body as if it were a sack of water.

10 His body resembled the iridescent cup of some gigantic flower, a mysterious plant from Indian primeval forests that someone had shyly laid at the altar of death.

Splendid reds and blues sprouted down his limbs, and in the heat the large wound under his navel slowly split open like a red furrow, releasing a foul stench.

15 The doctors entered. Friendly men in frayed white coats and gold-rimmed pince-nez. They stepped up to the dead man and observed him with interest, as if at a scientific meeting.

From their white cabinets they took out dissecting instruments, white crates full of hammers, saws with sharp teeth, files, hideous sets of tweezers, knives with large saw teeth as crooked as vultures' beaks forever screaming for flesh.

20 They began their revolting work. They resembled hideous torturers, blood flowing on their hands as they dug ever more deeply into the frigid corpse and pulled out its innards, like white cooks gutting a goose. Around their arms coiled the intestines, green-yellow snakes, and faeces dripped on their coats, a warm, putrid fluid. They punctured the bladder, the cold urine in it glistening like yellow wine. They poured it into large bowls, and it reeked of pungent, acrid ammonia. But the dead man slept.
25 He patiently let them tug at him and pull his hair. He slept.

And while the thumping of hammers resounded on his skull, a dream, a remnant of love awoke in him, like a torch shining in his personal night.

30 Outside the tall window stretched a wide sky filled with small white clouds that swam like small, white gods in the light of that silent afternoon. And swallows darted high across the blue, feathers quivering in the warm sun of July.

The dead man's black blood streamed across the blue putrefaction on his forehead. In the heat, it evaporated into an awful cloud, and the decay of death crept over him with its dappled claws. His skin began to flake apart; his belly turned white like that of an eel under the greedy fingers of the doctors, who plunged their arms up to the elbows in the wet flesh.

The decay pulled apart the mouth of the dead man. He seemed to smile. He dreamed of beatific stars, of a fragrant summer evening. His rotting lips trembled as though under a brief kiss.

“How I love you. I have loved you so much. Should I say how I love you? As you strolled across poppy fields, a flower of flames yourself, you swallowed the entire evening. And the dress that billowed around your ankles was a wave of fire in the setting sun. But you bowed your head in the light, hair still burning, inflamed by my kisses.

“So you went down there, turning to look back at me as you walked away. And the lantern swayed in your hand like the glow of a rose lasting in the twilight long after you were gone.

“I'll see you again tomorrow. Here, under the window of the chapel, here, where the light of the candles falls about you, making your hair a golden forest, and daffodils nestle around your ankles, tenderly, like tender kisses.

I will see you again every evening in the hour of dusk. We will never part. How I love you! Should I tell you how I love you?”

And the dead man quivered in happiness on his white death table, while the iron chisels in the hands of the doctors broke open the bones of his temple.