

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 26 (1958)
Heft: 12

Artikel: Aubade
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-570681>

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with a sword of flame in his hand, saying: «Here is the King of Kings and the Shepherd of Shepherds and the Friend of Friends, adore Him!»

And all the shepherds and John and Emmanuel knelt and adored Him.

And then the Child turned his head away from the breast and He looked at Emmanuel and John. And John had laid his head on his friend's chest.

And the God-Child saw another John with his head laid on another Emmanuel's chest, thirty-three years later.

And he smiled.

And the Angel spoke:

«Blessed be they who love and blessed be they who suffer in their love, for theirs shall be the Kingdom.»

FRANK

AUBADE

As when they were drawn into the deep sleep of exhaustion so they still lie — in close embrace, as though even in sleep they wanted to be sure of each other's presence.

Morning light filters through the green curtains submerging the long room in glowing twilight. On the pillow two heads, face to face — one strongly chiselled, wavy-haired, the early light kindling reddish-golden sparks in the other boy's brown thatch. How vulnerable their young shoulders, one slim and deeply tanned, thick and white and strong the other pair.

It's time for the sleepers to return from timeless dreams to enter the mills of day. When I cup their heads firmly with my hands to lift them they only draw closer together. A long minute passes before they realize my presence, and the world's. «Oh, it's you,» one says. «Ach, du bist es.» says the other. But an instant later they are swallowed again by suction from the night past.

Let them have a respite! I take a long time washing, shaving, dressing. Back in the room I find them asleep again. This time my hands are cold and wet and I put them firmly on their naked shoulders. They start convulsively and come awake. Soon — growling, grumbling, swearing — they disappear into the bath.

I draw back the green curtains and let in the trumpet light of day. Last night I was the midwife of their love. Now I am the sergeant of their duty.

R. A.