

# Last minute book review

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the darkened shadows of faraway bodies crouch to watch you.

The slow maelstrom of my bed received me, the vortex turned slowly around: lights winked, colors came and went, there was silent music crashing (now loud, now pianissimo) in my secret ear. And turning, turning, the bed bore me in a circle around the square limits of the room.

«Come to bed!» I rose half upright, and shouted. «In a minute!», he called. I stumbled to the door of the bathroom, peeked through the crack. He stood naked, one hand caressing the shoulder and arm of his other side. Over and over again, whilst he watched in the mirrors a thousand tall and ivory figures stroking their arms, their thighs, the flatness of their bellies, posing, turning, the face in profile, in full — the rosy lights catching and weaving a pattern of light and shadow, beautiful, beautiful . . .

I reeled to bed again, and the slow circular turning bore me down, down, down, and red poppies filled the air with slumbrous fragrance, and a lute struck a note like a crystal bell.

Then it was dawn. Through the black curtains sliced a thin edge of chill grey light. I listened, moving my tongue over dry lips. The rosy lights were still on, and I heard the faint sound of rustling, of stroking . . . I staggered to the crack of the door, and looked.

The window was a little open, a vagrant breeze flitted through. It rustled the green leaves of a gigantic flower, rooted in the mosaic of the floor — seven feet tall, the green stem slender and swaying, and the white calyx drooping. The sweet odor overpowered me. «Tom!» I called, opening the door.

Nothing, nothing — only the thin rustle of the pointed leaves, caressing the stem, the whisper of the white flowers turning ever so lightly, paper-thin, funereal sweet. And in the silent mirrors, a thousand milk-white narcissi bowed a little.

Oh, I am the envy of my friends! Now they come every night to visit me, to see my wondrous bloom! So little trouble — a bit of water once a day! The scent — as of heaven sprinkled in my room!

And I, so happy with my flower, tending it, loving it (the hunting days are ended), caressing its stem, plucking its petals, inhaling the terrible odor of its chalice, and (a secret!) oft-times at night feeling it slip into my room, to wind its tendrils gently around my body, pinioning my arms to my side, fastening my legs to the bed — almost like wide webbed straps, whilst I lay in the gentle embrace of my flower, knowing it cannot escape, for I hold it and it holds me, and the wide window has grown bars of itself, so that my Tom cannot leave.

— — Steward.

## Last Minute Book Review

«*The Feathers of Death*» by Simon Raven, 15 sh., published by Anthony Blond, London. Here is a worthy successor to Walter Baxter's «*Look down in Mercy*» and surpassing Baxter's novel in so far as it deals nearly exclusively with the homosexual theme. This first novel tells the, alas, tragic love story of a 23 years' old English officer and an 18 years' old private in an English colony, somewhere in Africa. Written in a prose equally excellent in its descriptive passages as in its dialogue, full of subtle irony, typically English in its understatements, entirely human and understanding in its approach to the homosexual theme the book moves on to its tragic conclusion with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. Definitely one of the best books to have appeared in years and highly recommended. B.

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