

Remembrance of our Victory at Grenada

By John Campion

After the war I had to go mad. One afternoon at the park, I grabbed a young boy by the throat and tried to strangle him. I naturally assumed that he had stopped not to retie his shoe as he pretended, but to remove and hurl its concealed bomb into our midst. Though glad acquaintances were able to unpeel 10 fingers round the throat, I still insist, with greater vindication than ever, that deductions concerning his ulterior motives were not farfetched.

Nighttimes, the paranoiac fear that neighbors, my so-called friends--cowed beasts of indefatigable patience poised in the lurch--prowled the baffling links of alleyways downunder the branchworks waiting for the precise moment when I would drop my only guard, that indeed, I was the next victim, so they might feed, gripped my subconscious mind.

The site of the relentlessly placid asylum on this insignificant island, far away, like a haunting melody to a deaf cobra, left me enervated and expectant. And the first appearance of my fellows, come from beneath the same mantle, reinforced my hope that maybe in this place, I would at least not murder anyone and prayed that nobody would murder me.

Initially, being strangers, we lived in suspended animation. We hovered about like specters wandering the halls, greeting one another with understanding, with knowledge. Time disintegrated. Gradually we began to trust one another. The ghostly feeling of the place vanished; our spirits held up the edifice. We were a family again. Happy. We almost forgot.

Various ones of us boldly struck out into the countryside all glad and dancing. We draped the building with ribbons. I remember a day when light from a triangular window glistened in a fellow's eyes and burst round like a wonderful star upon our countenances. All of us, suspecting a miracle, set up a stage and brought all kinds of fruits and colorful weeds from the wild pastures outside. We gathered leaves from the camphors, where lonely owls fly out towards points unknown seeking their wayward progeny. Made crowns for each and printed words on our palms. Draped the necks of farm animals with sea shells. We held hands in the daylight, walked to the seawall, and waited for the monotonous waves to lull us asleep. We closed our eyes together and in our dreams did not lose one another in the labyrinthine forest pathways, but walked straight through. We placed a mirror on the ground, laying a fish upon it, and watched it soar through the sky.

With crown tilted at a friendly angle, legs up, I was watching the broomgrass and goatweed thither when the sound of engines overhead brought a wind that sent them supplicating. Down below, the inmates were holding one another not as before. The chandelier swirled and creaked. A feathered hat flew across the field. The building began to collapse before we heard the explosion. Everything got slow. I saw the shock troops storm the beach. Later, a drunken soldiery, victorious under the cratered moon, went scot-free. Unreality lifted its windy head and bulbed out on the sand and rockscape. I felt a little like Mephistopheles in the window, and I felt a little like a hurt puppy, and a clown when the game is blown. The next minute passed:

The gang began to spin as in some bald mountain ritual of witches. Someone was going to get burned at the stake. The room bounced and tossed. Ogres set up nine pins and began to bowl. A bull's teeth crawled up its nostrils. Paint boiled on the ceiling and batlike attached to my hair and denuded my skull top, hotfreezing a small patch, now cold forever. Mouths opened and closed. A pyramid of human form slanted; conglobated lamp bulb teetering on a point

swelled and dropped. Bodies grew gigantic and distorted. Space swallowed a fat elongated arm, five fingers wriggling through mid-air. A top began to twirl. An eyeball lost all hope. Stairs climbed up the wall. The building turned inside out. Guts slid out from the cow's belly. A giant raised a knife and cut the roof off. Rows of bombs exploded and ghosts grew up and stretched their limbs. Maniacal horses lifted their fetlocks and kicked at bombgeists. A child came flying through the air and out the door. A head became a holocaust. Dogs were set on fire. The sand from the ocean covered us. Rocks pelted the floor. Our lungs were gunpowder. Banisters turned sidewise laddering spooks to heaven. Red faces fell out of their sockets. A toy skidded by. Soldiers, no doubt misinformed, but who will do anything, riddled the building with riflefire, scourging the skin off a few stragglers, while I triple-somersaulted through the turning window, lacerating glass tattooing the skin, my spirit barely resisting the urge to join my amputated leg in the hog trough. Walls began to expand as a circle of believers, unable to utter a sound before the spectacle lost their last strand. Invisible wires unwound, sprung out like dementia praecox in a distortion mirror, as the 37 dove a single word into the echo of a silent scream squatting on steel conduits and were buried alive--just before the explosion, an inverted milky-smoked tornado, vanished in their ears.

Miraculously in the haze, the dark cone reversed pyramidlike from ear hollows, where I saw them come forth astride the backs of fishes and glide straight through tree-tops to the round pearlescent moon.