

| | *xiii. The Clown.*

In the temple of the town
a sad conceited clown
is calling every voice to shout –

The snakes are silently slithering out!

and, rising with a furtive glance,
he will wave his arms and start to dance.

The conical hat
in the circus top
poised precariously
over the drop
wavering side to side on the rope
as fingers reach to grasp and grope,
when a fatherly hand
with cold command
grips the groin with iron will:

*Further onward
further still.
The last are first.
The first is least.
Summon your sons
to share the feast.*

A youthful head against his heart
pleading eyes and lips apart.
The line of his hand
the wine in his breath
betray the shimmering
shade of death.

Limping lewdly
onto his knees
he lowers his head
between the trees
and out of the curtains
comes a kiss.

The courtiers start to laugh and hiss
with folded arms and pointed leer:

He's only a child. He shouldn't be here.

And an aging monarch with multiple chin
waves his hand and sips his gin.

The mob is milling
around the gate
sowing the seed
of strife and hate
with the governor royally
raising his arm:

He's only a child! He means no harm.

But the voice of the mob is dark and raw
with craning neck and menacing claw
and the blink of a cold reptilian eye:

Give us Barabbas and crucify!

A man who knows the popular mind
stepping silently behind
with thoughtful frown upon his face,
his fingers flow with flair and grace -
and down the whip with a whining crack
and the governor calmly turns his back.

A sadly stooping
scarlet clown
with tangled hair
and thorny crown,
silent in disgrace.

A guard comes over and slaps his face.

Aching bones
and weary feet
clumsily climb
along the street
slipping and slumbering
into the mud
leaving an image
of sweat and blood.

Men look on with fearful mind,
children falling in behind,
dogs are weaving through the throng
sniffing the ground and running along
and women are wailing while he goes
in one of Jerusalem's holiday shows.

Into the block
they knock the pin
with horrible hammer
and clamour and din.
Up with the arms,
out with the chest,
into the beam
the buttocks are pressed.

The writhing dance of agony
now plays before the waiting crowd,
who watch with curiosity.
They relish every move until
the performer's head hangs bowed
and still.

A well-used spear casually
breaks the flesh apart.

Blood and water from the heart
falls to earth,
in a silent second birth,
to reveal a wounded snake for all to see.