



THE UNICORN

for a believer

dale estey



So it has come to this. A mindless voice with a mindless tune singing softly in the dark. Only would it be - could I see - is it she - is it he - is it me? My friend, I promise to you that on such a night even the sages are locked babbling in their rooms. On this I must stand firm: the greatest madness belongs to he who has not gone insane. I rest my case.

You think me mad. You think it is the wine which speaks. "Well, my boyze" (I talk in my best W. C. Fields voice) "Well, my boyze. I had a hen who could lay a golden calf. And this wierd guy - Mozes was his name, yass. Mozes threw these kinky stone tablets - threw I say, these kinky stone tablets on my hen, and killed her. Feathers everywhere. And I asked him - I said to him - hey Mozes, why did you flatten my hen and make the feathers fly? And he said - can you believe this - he said to me, 'W. C.' (I don't suppose he realized the pun) he said, 'W. C., I was damn hungry.' And I knew, my little chickadee, my little bottom-soft dumpling, I knew that the man was not sincere."

So it has come to this. I tell you, my friend, I knew it was ending. And perhaps the knowing made it easier. Who is to say? Who is going to argue? There are times yet (you must believe this) there are times yet when I cry into the night and no one is there to wake me from my slumberous hell. I am the first to admit that I lose sleep over my sleep. To joke of it makes it more manageable, but no less terrible. Tonight my sleep will be troubled, and tomorrow my day will be overshadowed. Like a gull on the wing, who laughs me to scorn and disappears over the ocean. Someday I shall follow. Someday I shall not return.

Suppose that the sun did not rise in the morning (It happened once - a volcano erupted in the South Seas and spewed pumice into the atmosphere - summer never came and baby birds froze in their nests.) Suppose it happens some morning and we are there to see it - feel it - live it. Darkness moving in like thickness of cotton and you sit and stand waiting for the light to come. And it never does. Constant dark. Constant black. Let me tell you, you would even pray for the Golden calf - the flattened hen - before you would stand for

the complete black. The inner-outer living tomb. The complete dark which throws gravestones in your eyes and makes you scream at thoughts of Paradise. For you who scream.

So it has come to this. A hermit's life is not an easy one. I promise you. To live alone is not a happy time. Ask one who knows. I tell you, a dog that only has the occasional bitch to bark at has more of a life than a hermit in his cave. To be lonely is to be cursed. To be lonely is to have an iron pressed in your heart. I had a cat who loved me once. (What happened?) He died. Didn't you all expect the answer? Let me inform you - Let Me Tell You - LET ME INSTRUCT YOU - death is the final answer of all.

Yet you disbelieve. No one will listen to those who tell the truth. To those who dance the dance. To those who live the life. Once there was a man who loved a woman. Then he loved another woman. Then he loved a third. And he went on - and on. He loved and fondled and seduced and bit. He made each body a holy place to hide. And at the end, when he was old, and deaf,

he asked a question no one could answer. He asked in a weak voice, with trembling hands: "Which one was true?"

So it has come to this. You ask what is the purpose of the Unicorn; and I answer thus: "The Unicorn lives on faith." The Unicorn lives on trust. The Unicorn lives by those who believe. Let me tell you this - there are too many people who do not believe - too many people who would leave the Unicorn to its fate, and cry only when it was too late. There are people who do evil, and people who do evil but do not know it. You must decide who is the worst. You must choose between the sinner and the sin - who is to win - who to lose.

I am told (or do I just dream) that Lady Katherine plays her harp for the Unicorn. Sings her songs, dances her dance. And that the Unicorn crosses the marsh, trots through the grass, and plays at her feet, moves with her tune. I am told the Unicorn moves his horn in stately sway, smiles its smile in rapturous time. When Lady Katherine plays. So I am told. And I believe, that ever if I see the sight, I shall find some rest.

POETRY

BROKEN PINE

i am pyramus
the world is *thistle*
though a hole in the wall
she visits me
love is as the lover
second-hand sunshine

i am a pilot
the world is my plane
through sky-clouds together
till we're down again
hope is as the dreamer
tall and broken pine

i may be a dead man
with deepest space my grave
or worse still a living one
crying only to be saved
time is as the waiter
lonely...and long

John Dempsey

A TALE OF YOUR MOTHER

I passed her often on the busy road,
Full of dust, carts, and black-dressed women.
The heat of the sun, and a little wine, made me tired
And she was thinking that her round, brown eyes
Would be smiling pleasantly at my seeing her.
Like all the men on the road she passed that day.
Each time we met she would part her lips
And grin at me, just like at all the others.
But I was a clever young dog in my day
And great was her surprise that very night
When she found that eyes were more than charms
-Places to put my sweet, moist kisses.

Alexander Phillips

LETTERS

Those longed-for summer letters
From home, from friends, from you.
Little bits of news, both bad and good.

From You -
That was the best part!
What you had been doing -
Your plans and dreams.

No thought of whether all the news was there;
No questions of what might have been left out.
I never wondered if you wrote what you really felt
Or what you thought you should feel.
Letters are taken on faith.

It's very sad,
The letter that goes unanswered,
Even though I understand why.

S.M.