

NIGHT IN THE RAJPUT PALACE

(for Claire Macquet)

M.L. McCarthy

Night shawls the lawn, uneasy in dregs of heat.
A monkey chatters. A sudden flare of ice
Scares off the warm proprieties of vice
From curtains and the guard's retreating feet.
The queens-of-darkness open wide, scent sweet.
My Lord's guests sleep alone, too chastely nice,
Save for some golden scamperings of mice,
As he, sumptuous in silks, appeased, discreet,
Steals out from shadows, softly shuts a door;
As virtue, struggling from temptation's leash
And sticky meshes of venereal guile,
Escapes down a lamp-sentinelled corridor,
Towards a small yellow flame before a niche,
That paints a slender devil's lacquered smile.

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