

# 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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