

part 3

THE FIRE SERMON

HOST: The Buddha tells his followers that the human senses and all that they perceive are burning.

FOLLOWERS: With what fire are they burning?

HOST

(as BUDDHA): I declare to you that they are burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance, with the concerns of birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, misery, dejection and despair.

The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept...
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

A rat crept softly through vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And the king my father's death before him.

ANTON: O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And her daughter
They was their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

NAT: What bird so sings, yet so does wail?
Oh, 'tis the ravished nightingale,
Jug, jug, jug, jug, tereu, she cries,
And still her woes at midnight rise.

RUS: Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forced.

Rus
+
Chris

HOST: At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting . . .

(as TIRESIAS): . . . throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

TYPIST: The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

TIRESIAS: I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavors to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defense;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows on final patronizing kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

TYPIST: My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised "a new start".
I made no comment. What should I resent?

HOST: I can connect
Nothing with nothing.

My people
Humble people who expect nothing.

With nothing.

ALL (surrounding HOST in a burning circle): Burning burning burning burning

HOST: O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

All (drowning HOST's voice): Burning.