

THE FOOL



Kris Hemensley

A gun repeats out there in the night.
Ten times? Twenty? Round upon round.
What kind of a gun? What kind of a man
hauling himself up the hill away from town
or tottering down the hill to the moonlit shore
after spending himself in the trees?
Ahead of the others to bed I jump as if I'd been hit.
Their voices downstairs spiral like camp-fire smoke.
Second thoughts return the shots to me
as a bird beating wings across the iron roof
before circling the forecourt between peppercorns
& eucalypts. As unexpected as the giant
who stoops above his parents in the photograph
by Diane Arbus unable to cough or laugh
without amplifying their eternal bewilderment
this clue to the secret of modern life
blooms under my feet. I'd rather blunder over it
& lay down again with a Golden Treasury
at my cheek preferring the fool's salvation
to heroism. I sleep without a fight
unwilling to distinguish my friends' distant laughter
from the sea's reverberations caught upon the wind.