

Three Black Ravens

Halfway up the Stairs

Thom Rying



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TUESDAY: TWO TWELVE TWO. Copyright ©2002, 2006 by Thom Rying. SONGS OF ARCADIA. Copyright ©1997, 2006 by Thom Rying. A VOYAGE TO LEONIA (SLIGHTLY ABRIDGED) and EPILOGUE. Copyright ©2006 Thom Rying. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews, the existence of which the author finds unlikely in the extreme.

Second Edition: 2007

Some portions of A Voyage to Leonia also appear in The Ragman's Shadow. Generally speaking, these are the poems and plays that contain the word "Carcosa". In addition, the author hereby confirms the existence of a longer, unabridged version of this work, but he frankly doubts there are more than two people on the planet with the patience for it. He is, however, perfectly willing to be corrected on this point.

A NOTE ABOUT THE TYPES USED IN THIS BOOK

Arrus, designed by Richard Lipton and released in 1991, is used for the main text of this book. It is based on Lipton's own hand-lettered calligraphic alphabets that draw their influence from classic inscriptional forms. Grandjon, used for the chapter and section titles, is named for Robert Grandjon, the hapless assistant of the vastly more famous Claude Garamond (c. 1480-1561). Grandjon's claim to fame is the design of the italic letters for Garamond's eponymous font. Grandjon's own font was based on the scrawled handwriting of Marco Curzola, stable hand to Duke Wilhelm (the Mad) of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. No Times Roman, New or otherwise, was used in the production of this book

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*Wherein What May Be Found Within this Slim
Volume is Duly Ennumerated for the Edification of
the Astute Reader*

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While Tuesday explores the urban landscapes of community and relationship, Songs of Arcadia focuses more on the rural and forested landscapes of solitude and silence. It was written five years earlier, during a sojourn on the Olympic Peninsula, primarily through the Hoh Rain Forest. Like Tuesday, it was written over the course of a single day, properly defined.

Despite the different subjects, the two cycles bear many similarities of tone and theme. Ruins, particularly, and memory both feature strongly. When this is gone, what will there be of us? Civilization and culture as ephemera are fitting subjects to ponder, perhaps, as we grow older and, hopefully, wiser.

I.

*Think about something besides
your own bellies for a change;
Light plays from your fingers,
caressing golden glowing leaves.*

*Earth puddles around my feet as I walk,
and I suck it into me like a
voracious, moss-hung fir,
and the Earth wholly fills me.*

2.

*Mountains float in their mist:
now is the time to listen to the forest.
We did not come these many miles
to listen to ourselves—
now is the time to listen to the forest.
Kaleidoscopes of immigrants spin by—
The forest watches with hundreds of eyes
peering through our rough-hewn souls;
now is the time to listen to the forest.*

*Steaming humanity in its hovels,
huddled for warmth, in fear,
lonely isolated lonely isolated
now is the time to listen to the forest.*

*A mat of living green conceals
streams of unexpected depth.
Stippled, rippled rain-soaked surface
hiding streams, clear as the
heavy humid air;
Streams of unexpected depth.
Now is the time to listen to the forest.*

3.

*Thundering up their trails,
in ignorance in an alien world,
humans pave over what they
cannot drown or in their
walls ignore.*

*It all sounds so obvious—
but how much more so and
horrifying in deep forest.*

*Can you shut it all away
And hear at last the rain?*

4.

*All at once and suddenly—
A sheer sheared tip heavenly pointing
and shattered shards discarded laying
a tree by lightning felled
and not the axe—*

*at least a more noble monument;
remains of that storied, centuried
life,
roots still grasping at the Earth.*

5.

*A colonnaded cathedral of furrowed fir,
the largest embracing an adolescent reedy spruce.*

*No wisdom gained in company,
No treasure found except in solitude.*

*Shining diamond dewdrops
Cannot be seen by those who
push their bodies heedless through glades.*

*The hypnotic rhythm of
bejewelled rain slipping
from the canopy of greenery
to the moss.*

*Whipping tendrils wrapped around
its meal but shortly dead—
measured in centuries
as roots take their stranglehold.*

6.

*Groves become an
encircling temple to
the dead and those reborn from them.*

*Every moss-slick boulder
become a flagstone;
Every moss-draped branch
become a tapestry.*

*And the encircling pillared colonnade
of trees become a
shrine,
under the webbed dome of
the canopy.*

7.

*The sky, achingly azure with
its clouds painted in semblance of a
renaissance ceiling.*

*Emerald is a poor word,
a miserly word,
for the trees and
their green.*

*Language washes out, overexposed,
and is nothing.*

*From this true silence speaks
the forest.
If we listen.*

8.

*We cannot absorb—
even through our covered, filtered skin—
So we capture what we can
through other lenses—eyes first
and when they are overcome,
cameras.*

*But it is only a shadow,
constructed in the dark by
greys and browns,
dim recollections of
a few
paltry
passing
photons.*

9.

*A leaf falls,
slowly,
in deference to the majesty
of which it is the smallest part.*

Silence.

One: A King of Carcosa

There was once a King of Carcosa and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.

Overture:

A sudden burst of automatic weapons fire from behind the audience.

Act One:

You stand astonished, incapable of movement or of thought. Like plankton in the maw of the behemoth, you are transfixed and enveloped, consumed by a monstrous force whose vastness and complexity you can neither appreciate nor comprehend. And this, somehow, is told to comfort you.

Perhaps they are only standing on whales, fishing for minnows.

Act Two:

Develop new models that are everywhere exemplified. These tiny, all too minor victories are the only that your stature permits. While a general sociopathy settles, like snow, over the urban population, sing instead of rivers and cherry trees using no consonants.

Amidst cold ice on iron, you must construct such thoughts from mere breath.

Act Three:

Hear the cry of the warrior not in your ears but in your own heart: one spirit, one body. Attend the sage's words not in your ears but in your heart: wisdom and precision. The ancient world is shallow in your breast.

This is your time.

Two: The Pallid Mask

*I am
a pale phantom, smoke,
my eyes holes of empty dark;
parasites seeking intellect.*

*I am
a dancer in this
swirl of haze and billowing,
touching every breath and colour.*

*I am
the dry-rot in the dream-house,
men and masks and marionettes.*

Dream of me.

*Three: The Classic of the Swollen River in
Dissolution*

Virtue

*There is no accepted iconography
when speaking of unearthly things.*

*Names are entrapping. We use them to define,
to box cartouche-like, a sum of life and
earthly evolution into a single word.*

*The names we make
fall into the hole
of our world.*

*They cannot climb those peaks closest
to the stars they name; they cannot escape
the earth.*