

1.

IT WAS the afternoon of a fine December 24th day when Bliss dropped in the house to alienate me from Edgar Allan Poe whom I was reading at leisure. He persuaded me to fly with him into a sociable which he described as a Christmas party, but I guessed was a mere jam session.

"You know very well that I don't have any training in dancing," I said, holding my hands up.

"But you will manage. Man!" My friend imitated the gesture of impatience of a child. "Grrrrr, you're hard to get with. Man, listen: there's also a *barrio fiesta* down there. Think of anything local-color in the way of entertainments, and there you have it." He proceeded beguiling me by singing an old country band song, and saying *bogsing! bogsing!* in between the lyrics; he next worked on his tongue and tried to sound like a gay banjo; and lastly, he pantomimed eating the leg of a roasted pig. This exercise made him flushed and he perspired a little. While he was still at it I seemed to hear Edgar Allan Poe say: "How very commonly we hear it remarked, that such and such thoughts are beyond the compass of words. I do not believe that any thought, properly so-called, is out of the reach of language. I fancy, rather, that where difficulty in expression is experienced, there is, in the intellect which experiences it, a want either of deliberateness or of method." I certainly did not mean any harm to my friend; we were fond of acting comiques to each other whenever we met privately. Only at that very instant I was a bit pen- sive.

However, my friend had at last my pity, my consent, and indeed I was ready to get dressed, but politeness told me to wait for the interesting finale of his show: Climbing the Greasy Pole.

2.

It was nobody's fault but my own that I was not social enough to enjoy the warmth of the party; I only sat in one inconspicuous corner of the parlour and talked casually with my neighbors. I was

somewhat pleased, though, to observe that although the room seemed too small for us, everybody, when the four-man combo played, had always a space to kick in, quaking the body and making Come-here signs by the hands, as if they were the red wings of some fried chickens in the *aparador* far across the floor. *Terpsichore* descended upon me, and a voice similar to that of Sandra Dee's was whispering "Dance! Dance!" to me; but I tightly closed my eyes at the idea, because when it comes to this kind of antic, for sure even the mummies of

headdresses sprang up and down before me. The sound of big hollow logs being rhythmically knocked, and the noise of sticks came to my ears. "Shake, baby, shake!" one shouted, clapping his hands, and many followed him. I was angry, especially because I had become the witch-doctor, and it was my duty to maintain order. I rattled my wand with the skull and vulture claws on it and said, "Whazzi! Wahzzi! Wahzzi!"

"Wah—. What are you saying?" the doll asked me in her very small, very high-pitched, accent.

Egypt would be amazed at the stiffness of my legs. The muse did not abandon me yet, so I practiced my feet below the table—enthusiastically stamping them. The exquisite doll beside me quickly kept her jeweled Arabian sandals away from peril, and nudged her companion and pointed at me. But I saw her finger, and they sat straight and behaved more aristocratically than before.

One thing which pays for standing at any jollity whether on his own accord or merely to oblige a friend is, that one is bound to witness a lot of surprises. I had the occasion to learn this lesson when, tired of the monotony of hand-pulling and whirlings, I was about to consign myself to the laps of sleep, something happened which altered the movement of the dancers. The combo played a weird piece, the influence of which was perhaps too strong over the dancers, because now often enough they leap almost to the ceiling as if they were stepping on some thumb-tacks. I did not remain long on this unpoetical appreciation; my imagination was flung wide open, and the opposite wall faded and was substituted by the awe-inspiring form of Mt. Kili-manjaro. Now ostrich feathered

"Wahzzi! Zhariyari-wari-wah! Wahzzi!" I said.

"Maybe he is already starved," the doll consulted her companion, and the two dolls in their glass cases giggled, covering their pink mouths with their heavily braced hands.

I called to mind the foreign dishes I read of somewhere, ah'd, humm'd, and recited, "Mousse de foie gras au porto. Paupiettes de Veau à la Grecque. Suppa de pesce. Artichauds à la Barigoule. Aubergines Farcies Italiennes."

For the first time the doll gave a friendly, slightly humble mien and shook her turbaned head, apologizing, "Sorry, I don't speak Italian."

After the moody African interlude, my friend walked across the floor towards me, as one might approach a tribal chieftain to ask his prognostication. "The table is being prepared," he broke the much delayed news.

3.

After I had partaken of the desert, I withdrew to the balcony,

# A R e n e w a l

sensing that to engage myself in conversation with any of the beaux and belles would require much daring since no one who could introduce me was around. There was a tinsel-and-ribboned Christmas tree there, softly lighted by a series of tiny fruits of nameless species. The cold mountain wind blew upon the tinkling silver bells of the tree and Santa Claus beneath it, and me. I rubbed my palms against each other and leaned on the rail.

An expanse of darkness, lanterns of various sizes, shapes and

ture, but in pursuit of a meaning of life. But the music created by the seasons was not festive; it was sad, it was the history of a longing, crying loneliness, of an absence that somehow I was at times every keenly sensitive to. Yet delightful, because of the fact, that what was absent was not thoroughly vanished. And when every thing settled, I had truly arrived! She was glancing at me in the sweetest dainty way. O that immortal smile! It was the same adorable countenance that challenged whatever eloquence I had of many a night and day before.

I took a deep breath, sighed and received the hands she gave to me. "To forgive is easy for you; but perhaps to accept is different. I was so afraid that you would say 'And now that I have forgiven you, I am through with you'."

"Never shall I use such language." She squeezed back to communicate her sincerity.

"I am always the guilty one! And yet you are all tenderness to me! I know that I shall die if I have to count the times that I forgot you. Oh the paradise of having you back to me."

"I shall be yours as long as you want me. You may walk away from me now and then, but I shall ever come at your call. It is written that I shall save you from other arms—from deceivers—and make you happy."

Inside a gay tune was played again, and the dance was started all over. Now new awareness inhabited my mind, and new significances were attached to things by me. For one, I took it that all these rejoicings were held in celebration of my regained love. And who was to say I was wrong?

#### 4.

To discard her for seemingly prettier girls would perhaps be not more sinful, more ruinous than to doubt her, to deny altogether her handsome, handsome goodness. Only the greatest of fools would say that she is good for nothing in the presence of bewitching temptresses that walk in numbers on the earth. Yes, the greatest of

# In Christmas

colors, outlines of houses, looming mountains, and an enveloping wide, wide sky of brilliant luminaries, were before and above me. Bamboo guns blasted at each other somewhere. From the radio in the house nigh came the faint echo of a melody about a little town of Bethlehem. People were walking along the road silently. What a moment! How much grandeur that hour contained about nine hundred-sixty and thousand years ago! My inquisitive soul was hushed up in a sacrifice of remembrance.

For a brief while I was so far from my usual self as not to discovered that a soul had joined me in the place. But when I returned from my mental excursion into the past, and was about to light a cigarette, I saw her. Then back I went, swept away by the seasons, seasons seizing me not by turns, but simultaneously as though they were a host of moods, scenes and events—and around and around. I was eddied in and out of the hourglass. Yet in all this no dizziness affected me. Rather, it was with thrill and delight that I journeyed. Now I rode on a big, big Ferris Wheel, then on some magic carpet, not in sheer expedition or adven-

Her blouse was plain green. Her right hand was changing the position of a star in the Christmas tree, the left hung naturally touching one of the big roses embroidered on her skirt. My eyes dropped further down at her smooth legs, then at her green high-heeled shoes.

"Faith!" I uttered her name in a voice full of nostalgia.

We advanced towards each other and when we met, I could not even pick up her hands. I melted be-

fore her divine loveliness, and the occasion. I measured her up again, and sought for words which were too slow in coming.

"I don't know if you can still forgive and accept me," I whispered.

"Why not, if you need me," she kindly replied, "as you always should."

fools I had been once; but that would never happen again. For now as I held her so tight in my arms, not even the stars with their strange sheen and flickerings could be made an unimpeachable emblem of my joy present and future if I shall be honorable to her. For now the bloom of life was bestowed upon me again, when before

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• by Junne Cañizares •

**A RENEWAL IN . . .***(Continued from page 3)*

hoped to taste once more the purity of laughter.

"How many times had I lost myself, and you found me?" I said. I gathered her hair in a handful, and pressed her head to my breast. I gently stroked her arm. She was lithe, ardent and aromatic. "Now I can brave the cruellest of winds and rains. I can command and be obeyed. For you are here."

"Yes. . . And it is only your notice that I demand of you," she said.

Cupping her face in the palms of my hands, I beheld her and her fairness made my soul her tributary for enraptured praises. I slowly brought my lips to hers. A shaft of moonlight hit the rail of the balcony and was directed into the artificial pond below; it bounced in several reflections that rang the leaves of the surrounding ferns, as though they were some lyres of ancient Rome.

The music in the sala ceased; there was a shuffle of footsteps; then, the leave-taking. Silence next. We leaned on the balcony, and looked out, carefully viewing the portion of the world and humanity presented to us. Afterwards, we reconstructed our dreams, reformed our plans, restored our objects, all for the best. I said my resolutions and promises, to which she listened with great understanding. She smiled at me, and I asked myself how the deuce did I live the days when I missed such blessing.

A shadow was cast on the balcony; we turned around, and saw my forever laughing friend. "Everybody has gone to hear the Mass. When shall we go?" he said.

"Right now!" we readily answered.

And we gladly walked towards the house of prayer, the three of us—Faith and Man, and Bliss.

**CHRISTMAS, 1960****CHAOS on Earth and  
HATRED to Men . . .**

ONCE AGAIN Christmas comes and the bland December breeze shall be filled with Christmas carols with this oft-repeated phrase: "Peace on earth to men of goodwill."

In these times when the whole humankind is being threatened with possible annihilation from a nuclear war, we cannot help thinking that the message which the angels sang to herald the birth of Christ may sound painfully strange and absurd, sarcastic and ironic.

What hopes have this generation and the future generation for **peace on earth**? What could have the heavenly voices meant by **men of goodwill**? Has the message of the angels after all come to naught?

Christmas comes, yet on the international scene the peoples of the world watch with stifled breaths as the brilliant scientists and great minds work feverishly to perfect the deadliest weapons which would butcher millions and millions of precious human lives at the press of a button.

Meanwhile on the national and local scenes we witness our so-called "leaders" cutting each other's throat in their mad scramble for fame and power. Our government officials, "the servants of the people", are recklessly looting the treasury of the nation, unmindful of the widespread poverty, disease and misery among the masses.

This Christmas the voices of the angels of the Lord shall become faint and their message shall become unintelligible. We can no longer appreciate the beauty, neither can we unravel the mystery of those lines, for as we look into our hearts, we cannot find the Holy Babe there. Nowhere can we find the Blessed Virgin Mary and the simple carpenter adoring the Holy Child wrapped in swaddling clothes. And nowhere can we see the humble shepherds paying their homage to the Savior. We do not have an inch of space for the Holy Family in our hearts for They are "untouchables." This Christmas we will also think it absurd to bend our knees to the King of Kings, for His crown is but a wreath of thorns. We, who someday shall scan the infinite spaces and the heavens and exclaim, "There is no God!" will also find it very embarrassing to take lessons in humility from a group of unlettered fishermen.

We, in all our conceit and fake "wisdom" shall continue to be confused unless we cease behaving like heathens and infidels. Our only hope for salvation and peace on earth is to live and behave like Christians. And our only hope for goodwill is to be humble before the greatness and infiniteness of God.

Then and only then can we decipher the meaning and fulfill the message which the angels sang, "Peace on earth to men of goodwill."

**by CHRIS G. GABRILLO**