

## The Flowers of Joy

### Part 1

#### I

He thought about Joy  
because of her laughter  
and her great  
    beautiful arms  
He pretended that he  
did not love her  
but it was not true  
he had to pretend  
so many things  
    in those days  
of immense confusion  
    recalling  
    the white flower  
she wore  
in her smoky black hair

It was about the letter  
    she wrote to him  
    from Mexico  
    where she had gone  
to stay with her father  
    or did she  
or did he merely  
    hear about it  
    from their friends  
    that she  
    had gone away

It was only  
a small part of her life  
in the Zen river  
of carp and diamonds

Look at the pigeons

in flocks  
do they kill  
and who is to blame  
if we are all innocent

The streets  
were dark  
and filled with paper  
like a storm  
dry and hot with dust  
and then when it became  
too dry  
clouds would break  
over the hills  
and rush rain  
into the tired  
Mexican town  
She would lean  
her elbows at the window  
and feel refreshed  
wondering  
how she could ever  
have cared for him  
She would sigh  
and watch the rain  
falling  
and the paper  
being blown around  
by the wind

He was in New York  
when her letter came  
the letter she had written  
with her finger  
on the glass and sill  
her almond eyes  
cast upwards to the sky  
The storm had finished  
and there was a moon )

Her mother was Italian  
and came over from Sicily  
She met her husband  
                                  in Mexico  
when she went there  
  to buy jewelry for her store  
  there was  
                  music from the thirties  
                  playing  
  lively  
    but sad  
Why must there be such  
                                  anguish  
  in the world ??  
We will be married  
  there will be children  
    we will dance  
      and sing  
  but of course  
they were only children  
  themselves  
to be having children  
and setting up stores  
  of silver  
    in plates and goblets  
and in time  
things went wrong  
  at the window  
    of romance  
      and storm

### III

The beast  
that bore down  
                                  upon the town  
with horns  
  of fire carries forth  
  its cross of iron

even as it crumples  
into sticks and dust  
          behold     \* )

#### IV

Perhaps he was dreaming....  
  about Joy  
    with her arms  
      full of children  
walking across the moon  
There were  
  bolts of lightning  
in the distance  
and the clouds  
were as black as smoke  
  and smelled of sulfur  
He awoke  
and listened to the sounds  
  of the city for awhile  
and then  
  fell asleep again

He remembers now  
that he saw her once more  
before returning to New York  
from San Francisco  
that autumn afternoon  
she was so casual  
like a cool breeze  
brought back with her  
  from the Sierras  
They spoke only  
of incidental things  
and acted as though  
everything was just the same  
She turned to go  
and then on impulse  
embraced him  
and then ran off

before the tears came  
It was a cold day  
with flocks of pigeons  
around the monument  
suddenly flying up  
    into the clouds  
        and fog

V

In his dreams  
it seemed as though  
the world were crumbling  
beneath him  
and Joy was leaning  
from the ledge of the window  
as he fell  
He fell from  
a great distance  
    like rain

VI

The seasons were  
    changing  
The rain sat  
in puddles  
    in the street  
and the lazy dog  
drank the rain water  
and the sky  
with its blue clouds  
could be seen  
dripping from its chin  
and birds came  
and scooped up  
the round droplets of sky  
and flew away

It would be winter soon

snow in flurries  
from the mountains  
would swirl  
in the streets  
just like dust devils do  
    in the dry season  
and the old dog would shiver  
and crawl into  
the warmth of the barn

Joy would close the window then  
and sit with her father  
    by the fire  
and watch the sparks  
    pop from the pinion log  
    what could she ever  
    have seen in him  
a skinny young man  
with sad eyes  
what ever could she  
have seen in him

## VII

The bishop wore  
a tall conical hat  
It was yellow and green  
and he walked slowly  
    through the desert hills  
swinging his cup of incense  
and chanting over  
    and over again  
the names of the saints

A coyote followed  
at a distance  
and then became  
like a blue flame

## VIII

It was the place he had  
on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
    with the broken lamp  
    and the window  
    open to the snow  
It was an angry and  
dangerous place  
    where broken wine bottles  
    and orange peels  
were arranged in the gutter  
in correspondence with  
the lonely street light  
and the colors  
emanating from the bar  
Everything seemed to glow  
with a violent  
    and shuddering energy  
    it distorted the music  
and altered the mind

They would hang out there  
or wander around and talk  
    and talk  
    go back to his place  
    and make love  
                    and sleep

IX

The snow sifted in  
through the  
    broken window  
and settled on the floor

X

In the night  
    the mice scurried  
    back and forth  
a half-moon  
was nailed

to the blue-green  
                  sky  
and tilted  
as it moved slightly  
the heat pipes clanged  
                  and hissed  
against the wall

## Part Two

### I

He was dreaming  
that he was  
with Joy  
her black raven's hair  
against the white pillow  
and how she slept  
so soundly

And then he was dreaming  
of a blue coyote

It was summer  
in his dream  
It had been hot  
and now  
with the desert cooling  
it was comfortable again  
The coyote  
came  
and lapped water  
from the spring  
                  that had no sound  
                                  and flowed  
on and on to no end  
and then he slept again

### II



There were only stars  
firing lines of cosmic beauty  
He was content  
    within himself  
there was nothing  
    he wanted  
He would wake for a moment  
in his dream  
    and then go deeper  
        into his dream  
    and into his sleep  
and then he would come  
fully awake  
and find that he was  
in bed with Joy on 4<sup>th</sup> St.  
    and it was winter  
and snow was sifting  
    through the broken window  
        onto the floor

### III

Winters on 4<sup>th</sup> St.  
were sometimes very cold  
Derelicts huddled in doorways  
or congregated in vacant lots  
heating hot dogs and cans of beans  
over rusty oil drums  
The winds off the East River blew  
as cold as ice  
forget the past  
and the stone tables  
    in the park  
for chess players  
    and pigeons  
    the streets  
        paved with red bricks  
        forget the seasons  
and the passage of time  
                forget the past

## IV

There was a  
café' on the corner  
where they went for coffee  
They would sit  
at the counter  
    of marble and glass cases  
and dishes  
    and glasses  
    like Manet's painting  
    of the bar maid  
at the "Bar at the Folies Berge' res"  
over and over in the mirror  
"You see  
    my friend  
the world creates itself  
and then  
    falls apart"

The waiter  
    said things like that  
that made no sense  
    and they would laugh  
and drink their coffee  
and dunk their corn muffins  
                    and hold hands

and then  
because it was suddenly late  
run from the café'  
    to the subway train  
        and in time  
were gone

