

Limb Bow

He believed too much. So, to protect himself he decided to become a hermit in the midst of society. Although his external character would use the games and conventions of society, he would keep his inner self tranquil and pure. Thus, fortified against the very people in whom he believed, he began the creation of a new person.

He became an actor, changing his face to fulfill the role demanded by the audience; a mirror empty but for the reflection of others. With the rich he was a debonaire sophisticate, sporting the latest gossip. With the young, wearing sandals and jeans, he laughed at bourgeois society. He knew, though, that he could always shed the hypocrisy, leave society, and still feel peaceful within. The external shell was necessary only for protection. His inner self wept at the artificiality, indifference, and hypocrisy of man.

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But he became tired from the constant strain and maneuvering to which he had subjected himself. He decided to leave for the provinces to spend the day by the ocean.

Going down a dusty road, he met a young peasant girl carrying a large basket of pan de sal on her head. He stopped her and, bowing slightly, politely requested some of the hard rolls. She gave them to him while looking askance at his refined movements.

After she was paid, she burst out laughing and walked on, whistling.

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The sand was black and too wet for footprints. He pulled off his white shirt and sandals and sat down to relax on a long flat stone. The glare of the sun reflected harshly off the sand into his eyes.

He got up to walk and began whistling as had the young girl. His heel pressed hard on the sand, discoloring it a lighter shade...The sun's reflection incessantly mirrored the speed of his pace -- until a small wave washed over his

feet. Absorbed by the water, the sun shattered into a thousand quivering pieces.

He stopped whistling and sought his reflection, but the waves vibrated too rapidly. The ocean sucked the foam back into itself, and his feet reemerged on the sand. As the water receded, the sun's reflection reformed itself into a smooth sphere which continued to glare at him. His feet kicked up pieces of water and sand which splashed onto the beach, then merged and dissolved into itself.

He turned around. The smooth black sand seemed virgin and unexplored. As he ran back toward the rock, the sun's reflection, unobserved, gave chase. The sand slipped through his feet and pulled his vanishing steps into the ocean.

He sat down to smoke. His fingers fumbled with the tobacco, dampening it; it wouldn't light. He slowly unraveled the cigarette paper and cast the tobacco into the wind, which was blowing towards the ocean. He pulled out a second cigarette. This one lit, he took a deep puff. The wind blew the exhaled smoke skyward in a large, circular pattern. He looked through the

circles of the smoke as the arched upward into the limbo of the sky's white clouds which now hid the sun

He laid the cigarette down and tore one of the rolls in half. After thoroughly chewing one bite, he walked to the ocean and again looked searchingly into the water, as if for the lost tobacco of his first cigarette.

When he turned, he saw that the sun's reflection had reappeared on the sand behind him. He dropped the half-eaten roll onto the glare. It looked like a dark hollow void in the brightness.

Accumulating a sizeable quantity of mucus, he spit into the sun and stepped on the roll. Another wave broke over his feet.

Having expressed his venom at the sun's external reflection and feeling that he had satisfactorily reaffirmed the purity and tranquillity of his inner self, he returned to the rock. Bread, spit, and wave were pulled into the ocean.

He swept the ashes of his unfinished cigarette onto the black sand, picked up the uneaten portion of roll and, whistling, began walking along the dusty road to the city.