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## EXTRACTS FROM PLAYS (74-79)

### A THE DOME AND THE TREES

**four**

**council chamber**

*chairman:*

abuse abuse abuse  
abuse bounces off me like a wall off a ball  
whether you like it or not  
you'll have to take it from me  
that wood is an eyesore  
and it'll have to come down

*councillor:*

i've liked the trees from the day i was born  
and my feeling is.....

*architect:*

planning proves the wood is an eyesore  
and it'll have to come down  
flats are more beautiful than trees

*councillor 2:*

when i sat on my pot i used to look out on trees  
and today i'm convinced that.....

*sawmill owner:*

to someone who has wood in his bones  
living trees are an eyesore  
and they'll have to come down  
planks are more satisfying than trees

*councillor 3:*

i was breast-fed until i was six  
and it was like sap is to trees  
if you want to know what my thoughts are  
they're these

*councillor 4:*

i slept with my sister till it was time to get married  
and she was as slim as a tree  
there couldn't be a truer word said

*others:*

our grandfathers introduced us to sex  
and the beauty of the woods  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

enter joko

*joko:*  
excuse me

*chairman:*  
it's no use standing up  
they'll have to come down

*councillor 1:*  
my feeling is .....trees

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*councillor 2:*  
i'm quite convinced.....trees

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*joko:*  
excuse me i want to protest

*sawmill owner:*  
the wood'll have to come down  
and the trees will have to come up

*councillor 3:*  
if you want to know what my thoughts are  
they're these.....trees

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*joko:*  
i want to protest about .....trees

*councillor 4:*  
trees.....there couldn't be a truer word said

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*chairman:*  
down with the wood

*joko:*  
the wood musn't come down

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*architect/sawmill owner:*  
up with the trees

*joko:*  
the trees have got to stay up

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*chairman/architect/sawmill owner:*  
down with the wood  
up with the trees

*joko:*  
if you pull down the trees you're killing the people

*councillors (together):*

*1:*  
i feel for this man and his trees

*2:*  
i'm convinced by this man and his trees

*3:*  
my thoughts are for this man and his trees

*4:*  
there's not a truer word said than this man and his trees

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*chairman/architect/sawmill-owner:*  
down with the wood

*joko:*  
people are trees - don't pull them down

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*chairman/architect/sawmill owner:*  
up with the trees

*joko:*  
destroy the trees - destroy the people

*chairman/architect/sawmill owner:*  
down with the wood  
up with the trees

*councillors:*  
save the trees save the trees save the trees

*chairman/architect/sawmill owner:*  
down with the wood  
up with the trees

*rest:*  
trees is what we all think we all think we all think

*joko:*  
uproot *them* - pull *them* down

*chairman/architect/sawmill owner:*  
down with - up with

*rest:*  
pull *them* down

*chairman/architect/sawmill owner:*  
up down - up down

*rest:*  
pull *them* down

*chairman/architect/sawmill owner:*  
up down up down

*rest:*  
don't pull the trees down - pull *them* down  
don't pull the trees down - pull *them* down  
don't pull the trees down - pull *them* down  
don't pull the trees down - pull *them* down  
don't pull the trees down - pull *them* down

**B**



four:  
**THE**  
**WILDERNESS**  
(1974)

**RG GREGORY**

## TWO

### QUEST AND THE CAT ON THE MOUNTAIN

- Cat:** It's a hot time of day my friend.
- Quest:** A cat sunning itself on the top of a mountain?  
No monster here if a cat can take it so easy.
- Cat:** It's a beautiful view from here. I've stretched out on these rocks since sun-up waiting for company to come.
- Quest:** You're like a cat I once had as a boy. I called it Tigger.
- Cat:** Ah. So you know me.
- Quest:** You can't be Mrs Hopp's cat.
- Cat:** Of course. And you're Alan, the orphan boy from the Grot. You were always searching through dustbins for monsters.
- Quest:** You used to scratch the door down each morning trying to get back in the house. I had to get up and let you in.
- Cat:** Sometimes I'd scratch on that door for hours before you came.
- Quest:** You used to rub yourself against my leg.
- Cat:** And you would swear at me and kick me away. I liked the feel of your leg on my fur. It was like making electricity. Why did you kick me away?
- Quest:** I couldn't stand cats.
- Cat:** You preferred killing flies. You were a very strange boy. You hated me, didn't you, Alan?
- Quest:** Not hated. A peculiar feeling.
- Cat:** Mrs Hopp used to dote on me. You didn't enjoy that.
- Quest:** You were a pampered and arrogant cat. You used to fix me with your eyes pleading for milk. But it wasn't a plea. It was a threat. I was twenty times taller than you, but you could shrink me to mouse-size.
- Cat:** No wonder you kicked me.

Quest: It wasn't meant as a kick. More as a flick.

Cat: Enough to fling me the other side of the kitchen.

Quest: You kept coming back. Your disgusting fur on my leg. Like a lickspittling slave.

Cat: No Alan. I was being a cat. That's what you were scared of in me. My catness. Or did I remind you of girls?

Quest: I had no feeling for girls.

Cat: You hated the softness. The feeling of silk.

Quest: No. I didn't hate it. I loved it.

Cat: You were terrified to admit it.

Quest: I was afraid I was like it .

Cat: As I rubbed against you you shrivelled your flesh.

Quest: Each time I flicked you away you came back, ignoring my anger.

Cat: I wanted your anger. To get you to do something brutal. So you'd be forced to look at yourself and feel shame. When you kicked me you were kicking yourself.

Quest: I wanted the love that Freda gave you.

Cat: She lavished her love on you.

Quest: I wanted it from her as a mother.

Cat: Mrs Hopp was more than a mother to you. But you couldn't accept her kindness. So you took it out on me, the only other living creature within reach. I was like you and all you hated to be like. But I was content with my place, wanting nothing but my keep and the touching of people. So you tried to stab me one night. With a penknife.

Quest: You were sleeping in Freda's chair.

Cat: The first of your murders.

Quest: You've hung in my nights since then.

Cat: I was the first of your monsters.

Quest: What kind of a cat are you?

Cat: I'm a lovable cat. If you want to, you can stroke me .

Quest: No. I don't want to touch you.

Cat: Now Alan. Don't be so naughty. I want you beside me. I want your hand smoothing my fur.

Quest: I can't move my legs. I'm stunned at the silk in your voice.

Cat: Alan, stay there. I'll come to you there. Alan, my big boy. Why don't you confess that you love me? You lapped up my sleekness running over your foot. You welcomed the shiver I sent up your leg. When you flicked me it felt like a kiss. When you kicked me it was a passionate hug. When you stabbed me .....Alan, tell me what it meant when you stabbed me.

Quest: You've grown too big for a cat. You drain all my meaning. I want to get you out of my bones. I have to make you the pool of my hatred. The pit of my black desires.

Cat: Now you climb mountains looking for cats, pretending they're monsters. What lies in your heart Alan but the most beautiful cat in the world, lapping your blood up. That's me, Alan. The most beautiful cat in the world. Your heart is this rock. Come Alan. Share this rock-heart with me.

Quest: I don't want to. I can't.

Cat: Can't is the most positive cry of desire. It's such a short step. Down where you are it's shadow. Here you can stretch in the sun at the top of the world. With your own special cat to possess. I'll miaow and you'll come. Don't be a spoilsport Alan. I've wanted you for ever so long.

Quest: Don't make that purr. It's sucking my breath away.

Cat: *sweet little pussy cat  
stretched out like a fluffy mat  
why must you lie in the sun  
big man with gentle heart  
can't bear to stay apart  
wanting to join in the fun.*

Quest: I can't yield to what you're asking.

Cat: Dance with me Alan.

Quest: I don't want to know you.

Cat: I'm to be felt. Not known.

Quest: I don't want you touching me.

Cat: I'm inside you already.

Quest: No one's inside me but myself. I won't have your fur rubbing along the inside of my bone. I haven't come up here to be seduced by a cat.

Cat: I touch you at your quick. I am the mystery you refuse to investigate in yourself. The black purring stream you will never dive into. I can slide and glide through your limbs like an unnameable fish. A black ecstasy. A silver fear. You have gone about your world crying out that you do not know me. All the time drawing me in through your teeth like sweet air. Bedding me down in your secret corners. Returning to me again and again. Your mouth parches at my unspeakable thoughts. Your bones ache for my liquid fire. You want the impossible Quest. You climb mountains whose peaks can never be touched. You launch against monsters that have never existed. You are a piddle of tears Quest. A frightened little boy who was never played with by his mother.

Quest: I am a hollow inside my bones. I am in terror of the absence of my roots. But I've built outwards towards the sun like any man. I exist in what I've done. The monsters I invent are the monsters I must have. I cannot help the struggle in me to conquer mountains. I must reach out and out transplanting corpses. I can't keep going back and laying wreaths at cradles. Recycling ancient pulp in nightmares for a mother.

Cat: Look at me Quest. I am your only monster. I give myself to you. Ravish me, you'll fetch that tune up in yourself you've been stone-deaf to.

Quest: My fingers shrivel at the thought. My lips evaporate.

Cat: Alan, just stay stock still. I'm coming to you. Stony heart let in the sweetness.

Quest: My tongue is bolted in my throat. My legs are locked.

Cat: There now, my boy. I'm rubbing myself against

you. Just like olden times.

Quest: *pretty pussy smooth as silk  
pretty pussy like some milk  
pretty pussy play your game  
pretty pussy turn to flame  
pretty pussy scorch my dreams  
pretty pussy drown my screams  
pretty pussy hold me tight  
against the terrors of the night*

Cat: I shall slip through the secret parts of your darkness defending you against the ice that encases you. I shall spread my black love through the caverns you have been terrified to enter. I shall lisp to the you in the you in the you and let you come to share me with those images you mine from your own earth's bowels. Quest, Alan, I am your first cell the seed made its mark upon. Turn your soil inside out. Convert darkness to sun, pits to mountain-tops, cells to the wide world, dread to hope, desire to fruition. I am the all-cat, the dying-for-love cat, the wanting-you-now cat, the peace-in-your-bones cat, the ripest-of-fruits cat, the totally-whole cat, the swallow-the-sun cat.....

Quest: No. You are the hate cat, the ripper-of-flesh cat, the bleach-my-bones-white cat, the bash-me-to-pulp cat, the cat of temptations, the cat that must shatter my mind, that must pulverise my heart. In your presence I am shaken by earthquakes.....

Cat: You don't know what I am. You won't hear my songs.

Quest: I don't seek such wealth. Leave me be.

Cat: You chose to come here.

Quest: I was looking for Flute.

Cat: You knew it was me.

Quest: You? You've always stood in the way of my growth. You stole the love I needed so badly.

Cat: Make me the love that you now need so badly.

Quest: I don't need your kind of love.

Cat: I can offer you such pleasure.

Quest: Nothing. Nothing. You offer me nothing.

Cat: That's not what the shakes said. Let me lie in

your lap.

Quest: Get away from me you sod. You came in this house as a stray. Now you count more than I do.

Cat: You're as much a stray as I am

Quest: But I'm human. You're nothing. You sleep all day. You rifle her love. She puts you above me. She promised herself as my mother. But it's you that she loves.

Cat: She shares everything with you. But you steal from her sideboard. Little pieces of silver. I've seen you. You care nothing for her.

Quest: You're not asleep in her chair. You're watching me. You turn her against me. You're sleek and you're fat. I'm the thin starving one. I have to steal. It's the only way I can eat what I want.

Cat: That's Grot logic. When she finds out she'll put you away. She's threatened it a number of times.

Quest: I won't let her.

Cat: You'll drive her to it.

Quest: You'll make her do it.

Cat: She'll be much better off.

Quest: With only you two in the house.

Cat: We understand each other.

Quest: See what this is?

Cat: A little boy's pen-knife.

Quest: A cat-killing knife.

Cat: Don't be so boring.

Quest: I'd like her to see you dead.

*He stabs the CAT*

Cat: Cat-butcher.

Quest: Pussy's afraid.

Cat: You do want to kill.

Quest: Your smoothness's obscene.

Cat: Your evil's mouse-sized.

*The CAT goes for his face.*

Quest: Black witch you. You've gouged out my face.

Cat: You titch of a mouse. You shrivelled-up nibbler  
of cheese. Stab me with your nib of a knife?  
Come sniffing for me on my mountain? Do you  
know your soft pussy turned tiger?

Quest: You've scratched me like a mapful of rivers.  
I'm all running red.

Cat: I'll play with you mousekin.  
I'll lark with you, dance with you, mousekin.  
I'll leap with you, lie with you, swipe with you,  
My red little mousekin

Quest: I'll have no insides left.

Cat: Jeer at you mousekin.  
Scratch at you, leer at you, mousekin.  
Claw at you, snarl at you, rip at you,  
My red little mousekin.

Quest: I'm red springs, scarlet fountains, gaping  
bloody craters.

Cat: I'm the all-cat. the dying-for-love cat, the  
wanting-you-now cat, the peace-in-your-bones  
cat, the ripest-of-fruits cat, the totally-whole  
cat, the swallow-the-sun cat, the turn-inside-  
out cat, the tornado-unleashed cat, the chew-  
up-your-heart cat, the swirl-you-and-hurl-you-  
to-death cat.....

Quest: My blood flows from me  
like mountain streams

Cat: I'm cat. And I sit on the mountain. The  
mountain is one big cat. The mountain is  
sleeping.

Quest: My mouth erupts  
with molten screams

Cat: And I'm the black cat  
your desirable mother  
I'll have you and eat you  
and sleep with another.

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five:  
**FLUTE  
BELOW**  
(1976)

**RG GREGORY**

**SEVEN  
FLUTE AT THE EBB**

Flute:

I'm going to skip a large part of this dream. You'd be bored to hear it. It's a going round and round part. I've been hungry depressed worn out and halfway off my rocker. Sometimes all four states together. All of it the kind of bad experience that's supposed to be great for you because it takes you deeper into yourself. I'm as much a stranger to me now as I was then. I rush about looking for the unknown parts of me to reveal themselves and I always end up back at the same old oak door right at the centre of me. It won't open by itself. I can't kick it open and if it needs magic to budge it I don't have the right supply of magic words. Or gestures. I don't have the strength or brains to make anything of myself. And now I can't even get angry about it. What next? I may as well squat down and take root where I am. Well that's what I'm up to now. Waiting for my backside to send out suckers into the ground around me. I'm going to watch myself turn into a plant and then analyse

myself as a botanical specimen. I'm glad I'm a long way from Quest. He wouldn't understand me at all. He'd have to start eating me up. But I haven't it in me to be an enemy of Quest's any more. I've made him what he is. I've let him have Strugnell all to himself and it's corrupted him. Now I'm out of the way he's his own worst virus. But that's his problem. I can't even cope with the seeds of my own death. As for Mary – I've given up on her. I'll never see her again. I'm finding it hard to remember what she looked like. Anything happening so far? No. I'm still animal. Detachable from earth. Split off from my own creation. I'm such a lightweight. I need to be more broody. Weighty. And willing my new roots to come out of me. I'll use this lump of old root. Holding it - it'll press me more into the earth and I'll start to rot a bit more rapidly in the vital parts. I could meditate I suppose. Study my navel or something. If I knew where my navel was. I always thought it was something to do with playing ships with yourself in the bath. No. I'll stick to this damn great root. I'll peer into it to see if I can imagine it into a crystal ball. Or pass myself into it like a woodlouse. Anyway it's time I packed in the Flute solo. I'll pipe down and keep quiet for ever more.

*He stares at the root*

*Enter BLEWITT*

**Blewitt:** Hello. Are you cloud or caterpillar? Do you like my legs? I've just grown them. I'm out for a float. You don't need to look at me if you love me. Do you have a name?

**Flute:** Go away. I'm rooting.

**Blewitt:** You must love yourself Rooting. You've the most diaphanous wings. I love that word lovely Rooting. I can't remember the word I love. So many words and I love them all. But I can't remember who they are and where they come from. Are you going to fly away? Come back this time next year. I shall always remember me. Cloudy caterpillar. Caterpillary cloud. Silent diaphanous Rooting.

**Flute:** I'm not Rooting. I'm rooting. Go away.

**Blewitt:** Why are there four of you? There should only be three. I'm coming unstuck. Perhaps one of you is real. Don't be real Rooting. Even one of the four of you. If you like my legs you can

have them. I've got plenty of others.

Flute: I've got my own legs thank you.

Blewitt: Clouds can't have legs.

Flute: Caterpillars can though.

Blewitt: I suppose clouds could have legs if they wanted them. There are now six of you which is normal. Anything with three is normal.

Flute: I don't think this is going to work.

Blewitt: You've got the root and you're Rooting. I'm silly. I'm a clumsy carthorse. Forgive me Rooting won't you. I've blundered into the circle of divinity before the others. I didn't know. Look. My legs are thick and ugly like a dirty old stallion's. I must find the blue water. I must purify myself to find the root.

*rooting and tooting  
the owls all hooting  
little amy blewitt  
no one wants to screw it*

Oh Rooting reach out your divine hands to choose me. Choose me. Which one of *me* am I to follow? *I'm* coming apart in so many directions. Which one of *me* will you choose? Quickly. So I can follow *me* before I'm out of sight.

Flute: From this angle there's not much choice. That one.

Blewitt: I'll follow *me*. I must be going off to find the others. I'll have to follow.

*She goes*

Flute: That's more interesting than playing with ships in the bath. Now what do i do? Sit here and wait for more visions? Or go after her? Is she real? Whose world am I in at the moment – hers or mine? *You've got the root and you're Rooting.* Circle of divinity. Others. Perhaps this is the old oak door giving way a bit. Go in then before it closes on you. Follow the girl. I mean she quite seemed to fancy me. Perhaps we could study our navels together. A bit difficult if there are only six of me and twenty odd of her. Still something's stirring behind the old oak door. I'd have to be stupid to pass up this bit of experience without having a go at it. Don't tell me. I forgot. I am stupid. Damn. But not stupidly stupid. I'll take the old root. It seems I important. Damn she's

coming back. And bringing others with her. Am I for it? Shall I run? Suppose they're all in the same proportion as she is. There could be over eighty of them and only six of me. Three run and three stay? But she didn't touch me did she. And she apologised for breaking the circle of divinity. I'm safer where I was. In the circle. Clutching the old root. Die off King Flute. Long live lovely Rooting.

*He sits down as before*

*Enter BLEWITT with DOGROSE JERBY and CASH*

**Blewitt:** There look Dogrose. Cloud Caterpillar. Lovely Rooting.

**Dogrose:** There could be significance in this. Significance.

**Jerby:** It's my daddy eating his heart out waiting for Jerby to say sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Etcetera daddy. Etcetera.

**Cash:** Square root. It has to be square root. If you take the circle and halve its circumference. Put it in a pot of the same size and stew it - there must be a square root somewhere. That's right AJ isn't it? It can't work without a square root.

**Dogrose:** The circle is the mother. The root is in the mother. I dimly see a great significance but the creature there obscures me. It could be the infant wonder prematurely seen. It could be. If only we could let it.

**Blewitt:** It's collecting some of my legs. We've given each other lovely words. Can't remember them. So many.

**Jerby:** I will not go upstairs to say goodnight. You can cry as much as you like. I will hide in the cupboard and sing silently to myself. Like this. See if you like that.

**Cash:** Listen. Listen everybody. We must do something about this. The square root is missing. I had it in my handbag and somebody's taken it.

**Dogrose:** Pay attention. Silence and pay attention. Are we all happy? It is very important we make up our minds. Are we all happy?

**Jerby:** I'm happy when I'm crying. I'm happy when I'm crying.

**Cash:** Of course we're all happy. That goes without saying.

**Blewitt:** That's a lovely word - happy. Another one of lots of lovely words. Lovely is a happy word too.

**Dogrose:** Then it follows that the circle of divinity is not broken. If it is not broken then no one has broken it. If no one has broken it then whoever is in it cannot have broken it. Therefore that Whoever belongs in the circle of divinity. That Whoever is part of the power of the root. Whoever is one with the root. The root is one with us. Whoever and we are one. Welcome Whoever. Join us at the Ebb.

**Flute:** Who me?

**Cash:** You must be the missing square root. Don't worry AJ the missing root has turned up.

**Jerby:** If I say sorry can I come out of the cupboard?

**Blewitt:** My lovely Rooting Whoever. Pst. Can I have my legs back sometime? Unless you want to pay a fine. You can borrow some more later.

**Flute:** I can't remember where I put them.

**Blewitt:** Silly Rooting. You've stacked them on your heads.

**Dogrose:** The root shall be brought. Without the root there is no vision. It is significant that we have all come. It is now significant that we all go back to the Ebb. Whoever shall be bearer of the root. He wears our happiness for us. Accord him charm and graceful entries into yourselves.

**Jerby:** If you knew my mummy you would not understand the way I sing to myself.

**Blewitt:** *amy blewitt  
always knew it  
who's that rooting  
try and do it*

**Cash:** If you want to inspect the books I'll speak to AJ. Come up when it's dark. But bring your own torch. Comprenez?

**Dogrose:** Stay here Whoever. There are significances that may have escaped you.

**Flute:** I think the six of me should have run.

*JERBY BLEWITT and CASH go*

**Dogrose:** Now my friend. Please give me the root.

**Flute:** I've held it so long I'd feel cold without it.

**Dogrose:** I beg you. Give it to me at once. If I don't have it I shall die.

**Flute:** What is it - magic?

**Dogrose:** It is of no significance to you. To me it is the Life. Without it Dogrose is unbearable. To himself. All pretension. No gaiety. No simple abandon. A wild bloom coming and going by its own nature. Help me Whoever. I'm solitary. Desolate. Sinking. Sinking. I must.....

*He collapses*

**Flute:** I'm no nurse. I can't even stick a plaster on straight. Shall I fetch the others? No. I can't leave you here. He might even be dead. I'll carry him. Or drag him. Or something. Help. Help someone. Better put this down I suppose. Unless I balanced it on my head.

**Dogrose:** A kick and a punch first root of the month.

**Flute:** Ouch. Stupid again. Stupidly stupid.

**Dogrose:** Rootless and witless. That is the significance Whoever. The Root gives life, The Universe is purgatory besides. Now we can survive again. Join me at the Ebb if it pleases you.

**Flute:** Why didn't you just ask for it properly without all that weirdy dance drama?

**Dogrose:** Dogs don't give up their bone to other dogs without being sharply bitten.

*across the wilds a rush of wind  
wraps the seals of paradise  
the state of ecstasy is blind  
the self destroyed is wise*

*He dances out*

**Flute:** That's the limit. I've been pushed about too much. I'm not going to let a toothless wild dog called rose play a dirty trick on me like that. I'm going to go back to the significance of a mild bit of brute force.

*He goes out after DOGROSE*

*Enter BLEWITT JERBY and CASH - elsewhere*

Cash: My book has been scribbled on again. My lovely accounts. Jerby - have you been in my room again? You snotty-nosed illegitimate gerbil?

Jerby: You fat horrible blubber. You don't care about me. I won't eat my breakfast. I won't. I won't.

Blewitt: I'm getting so old. You're making me so old with this screaming.

Cash: I have to present these accounts to AJ next week. He'll be furious. How can I tell him they've been scrawled on by a gerbil?

Blewitt: Stop screaming at me you temperamental bitch.

Jerby: If you touch me I'll make a terrible noise.

Blewitt: I hate the look on your face. It's so old. So old and spiteful.

Cash: This book is biblical. It's blasphemy to deface it.

Jerby: Get away. I'm warning you.

Blewitt: Don't scream.

Cash: You Cain. You Herod. You defiler of temples.

Jerby: Shan't. Shan't. Shan't. Shan't. Shan't.

Blewitt: Minx. Jezebel. Serpent. Serpent.

*They are fighting themselves and each other*

*Enter DOGROSE*

Dogrose: People at the Ebb. The root has returned.

*Enter FLUTE. He seizes the root*

Flute: And so has Flute. Work out the significance of that my old nut.

Dogrose: You must give me the root. You are destroying what you do not understand.

Flute: Calm down. I'm not going to destroy anything. But until I understand what's happening here I'm keeping the root.

Cash: I'm so famished. AJ take me somewhere to

eat. Somewhere very expensive.

**Jerby:** You toffee-nosed bastard Dogrose. You said you could get it.

**Dogrose:** I tried significantly. But the stranger is persistent.

**Blewitt:** Listen son. Give over the root and go away. If you don't you are in danger. We'll have to kill you to get that root.

**Flute:** What is it?

**Dogrose:** It's Mandragora. The staff of life. Let me have it you gormless peasant.

**Flute:** Not so fast Rosey. And stay where you are - all of you. You're pooped out and I'm not.

**Cash:** It's beginning. The sickness is beginning.

**Dogrose:** You are interrupting the rhythms. The seasons.

**Jerby:** The root is cowcake to you. Unless you want to join us. If you have nothing to live for the root provides the reason for living. If you are at the Ebb the root introduces a whole new flow.

**Cash:** You blue-nosed swine. You swallower of cat's innards.

**Blewitt:** I'm getting cramp in my belly. It's like the twistings of a serpent inside me.

**Cash:** I want my baby you floozy. I want it now. Now. Now.

**Flute:** All right. All right. You can have your baby. In a minute. But not right now. If anyone goes for me again I'll run away. And I can run away faster than anyone. I've had lots of practice. Can you all hear me? And your root will be gone forever. But I must know. What do you suffer this for? What's the joy in it for you?

**Jerby:** The answer's in the root. It gives truth at the same time as it hides it. I'm getting a pain round my heart. I have to have the root.

**Blewitt:** You stupid green blunderer into other people's pains. You knife. You virtuous tormenter.

**Cash:**  
*i can't cope  
there isn't any hope  
turn the bleeder over  
he's wrapped himself in a rope*

Dogrose: Cash is going into a coma. We all will without the root.

Flute: Can't you come to terms with yourselves some other way?

Jerby: With the root we're safe here. We don't have to be ourselves. We can be the other. The other.

Flute: What are you fighting?

Dogrose: The fight is the illusion. We've given up the fight.

Blewitt: I don't want to face myself again. She's monstrous. Old. Wretched. And monstrous.

Flute: You can have the root. It's like holding a snake.

Dogrose: Bless you Whoever. We shall be with you in our forgetfulness. Friends at the Ebb. The root is back with us. The circle of divinity has linked its arms again.

Jerby: Join us or go Whoever. The stranger looking on is a symbol of the dying.

Flute: Join you? What - stay forever?

Dogrose: Take a tiniest fragment of the root. Then go when it is over if you wish. There will be no kickback if you take the smallest portion. But if you go be careful not to disturb us. And accept what you see without derision. We seek a goodness outside ourselves.

Flute: I'll join you then.

Jerby: Cash. The root is here. You can be one again.

Blewitt: Complete the circle. You have a nice hand Rooting. You'd do well to stay.

Flute: I'm just stupidly stupid.

Dogrose: *across the wilds a rush of wind*

Blewitt: *wraps the seals of paradise*

Cash: *the state of ecstasy is blind*

Jerby: *the self destroyed is wise*

Flute: I don't know any more lines.

**Dogrose:** Just take Whoever. The tiniest portion. Place it on your tongue as we have done. Then lie back. The root will let itself be known to you in its own way. Which will be your way too.

**All:** *the circle of divinity  
dreams its tendrils into me  
the soiled self dissolves to mist  
the root is the spirit's alchemist*

**Jerby:** I am on my treadwheel going round and round in my cage. The sun shines.

**Cash:** I am coming up out of darkness. AJ is lingering there over the books.

**Blewitt:** I sit by the bank looking into clear clear water.

**Dogrose:** I am poring over an old book. My head absorbing knowledge as a leaf absorbs light.

**Flute:** I am a dog panting in front of my master. He is throwing a stick for me to fetch.

**Cash:** AJ is kissing the books.

**Dogrose:** My eyes are going down into the pages. The paper is like earth crumbling.

**Jerby:** Round and round. Hundreds and hundreds of times.

**Flute:** I'm jumping into the pond. I'm swimming. Swimming through silk water.

**Blewitt:** *when i was a little girl  
my face was round and sunny  
now i'm growing up a bit  
it's turning very funny*

**Jerby:** Mummy. Daddy. Look at me on the treadwheel.

**Cash:** Books and beds and figures and me. It tickles to have fingers counting down the columns.

**Flute:** I could swim and swim and glide. I can walk on air.

**Dogrose:** Lanes and briars. Stepping out without a book in my head.

**Flute:** Strugnell's house. Such a gloomy old house.

**Blewitt:** My hair is so lovely. Like green fronds under the water.

Cash: If you tickle me AJ I shall splash you and splash you with laughter.

Flute: Quest. Snipping at me with large garden clippers. He's fallen out of the window. He's fallen out of the window.

Jerby: I can't help laughing. Everybody's laughing.

Flute: He won't like it if he sees me laughing.

Dogrose: I'm free. I can open and shut myself as I please. It's so simple. I'm laughing all the way out of my heart.

Blewitt: I'm so beautiful I'm laughing.

Cash: Stop it AJ. No don't. Don't stop. You must make me laugh. Forever.

Flute: No. No. I mustn't laugh. Quest will hear me. But if I don't laugh I'll burst. I can't help it Quest. You're not going to stop me laughing. Laughing. Laughing.

*He wakes and sits up. The others are still laughing.*

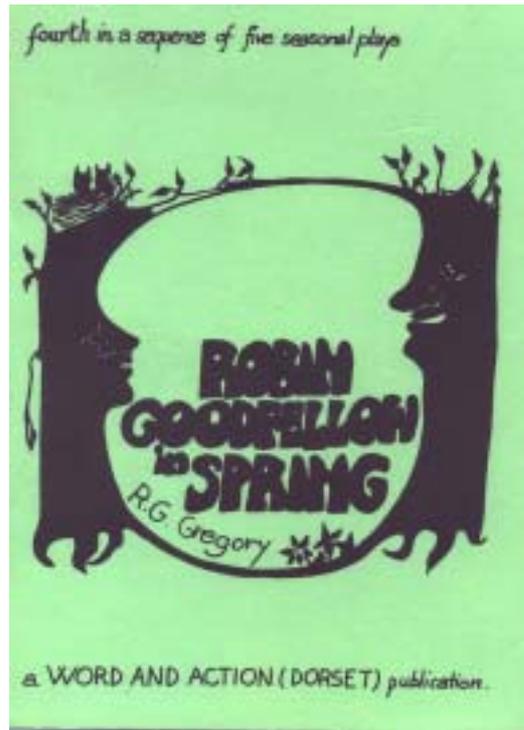
Flute: How crazy can you get? Everybody's laughing including me. I wonder what they're all laughing about? Ecstatic vegetables. Beyond everything including defeat. As long as the root lasts. What would happen if I threw the root away? Mass murder I should think. It can't be the answer can it? Not for me. I'm stupid without any root to help me. But I don't want to be a vegetable. Even an ecstatic one. This laughter's obscene. It's too safe. They don't need a Quest to defeat them. They're defeating themselves. I don't want that. The brute force and the brains. That's Quest's world. I'm useless in that. But what's the use in having all this bottled up inside you and not using it to live? It's tubs of precious red wine you can swim in but you can't drink. What I've just been through wasn't me. But the wish of me. If I want to fulfil that wish I've got to do something. But what? And how? The old oak door is still closed. How do I get past Quest without entering Quest's world? If there isn't any answer to that then maybe the root is the only way. And this laughter is distilled wisdom. I think I'd sooner have Quest. Which leaves me further back than I started. I must get away from these secret blue movies. But where? I still don't know. There's nowhere to go. OK Flute – alias Jonathan Whoever Rooting - go nowhere.....oooooh

*knees up flutey brown  
knees up flutey brown etc.*

*He leaves the Ebb*

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D



## EXTRACT

*Enter Doctor Sage with Robin's body*

Sage:  
sodogrecat my twin  
has done our robin in  
he suffers from distemper  
his trouble's *idem semper*  
(latin you know for chronic)  
he expects me to find a tonic

i dabble a little in herbs  
cures for whatever disturbs  
life from its natural flows  
i tempt canker from the rose  
dead bodies i find rewarding

replace their umbilical cording  
as it were - life is a womb  
and dying is its birth into doom  
don't be flabbergasted by such opinions  
being sage of course i know my onions

Robin:  
hold it - i'm playing goodfellow  
not a stick-me-all-over pin cushion

Sage:  
i really can't stand corpses that bellow  
lie down you stiff - get a shush on

Robin:  
let me make this clear from the start  
pins are out - or i'm going straight home

Sage:  
acupuncture is such a delicate art  
i could give you a nail through your pate-bone

Robin:  
that would kill me once and for all  
i'm human not a can of cold beans

Sage:  
you're dead as a pawnbroker's ball  
i have to revive you by natural means

Robin:  
what's natural about a nail through the brain

Sage:  
if you're as ignorant and awkward as this.....

Robin:  
i'll be a plant and come alive in the rain

Sage:  
sodogrecat can give you life's kiss

Robin:  
alright alright i'm dead

Sage:  
you remove your objections to acupuncture

Robin:  
anything but a nail through the head

Sage:  
the corpse is being sensible at this juncture

Robin:  
i can get on my feet without chinese torture

Sage:

your blood's run cold but your tongue's still quick  
you haven't a ghost of a chance of resurrection  
i shall have to silence your gab with an unnatural trick  
before the spring can oust in you the winter's dereliction

go to sleep you box of chatter  
seal your tongue and let its natter  
disintegrate inside your cave  
learn how proper stiffs behave

before you wake to life's enhancement  
a second death will seek advancement  
when you're silent i'll begin  
to let the silver sunlight in

then the fury that is riobin  
will set its earthly pulses throbbing  
only then will the green volcano  
will itself from the want to say *no*

stand up you corpse in death's grim sleep  
and into other regions creep  
safe from the sight of these good folk  
for whom decayed robin's beyond a joke

Robin:

oogly oogly oogly  
boogly boogly boogly  
my own hair's rising on my head  
to think I really might be dead  
if i'm not it must be my skill  
as an actor making you people ill  
i've never seen faces look so white  
to think I could stand here all the night  
and fill brave people with such fear.....

Sage:

you ghoul - it's your verbal diarrhoea  
get out you lump of worldly clay  
or there'll be none left to watch the play

don't worry friends I have a scene  
that will wipe your boredom clean  
robin must pay for his wordiness  
by undergoing a dire distress  
can you imagine a more desirable fate  
than for robin to be killed by his loved one - kate

*Doctor Sage and Robin go out*

\* \* \*

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