The Lion-Tamer

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THE LION-TAMER

Always our fear jumps from the veering car, the flower-pot fallen from far, or the hiss of a snake in the dark, but there they are all rolled into five lions, an abyss of bars, and ourselves unsafe inside the star.

If he should fall beneath a lion’s claw, if he should spill the tasteless blood upon the sawdust floor, if he should wastefully withdraw, our hateful tongues would lap at the bleeding flaw.

Instead we clap for the foolish staring eye nine inches from a hunching kitten’s maw and say we looked at death and did not die. This is so nearly true the smaller children cry for the clown’s long fingers soft on their hurtful awe.

THE THEFT

Above the burning bauble, his mind turns till theft becomes a promise of repose beyond the common cowardice. He yearns to fold it inward like a secret rose.

He hesitates. His doubting fear will show, his hand betray him like a virgin boy disrobed by love. He quickens, turns to go—then all his senses to one end deploy.

Outside he breathes as from an act of love, swiftly, the air’s soft peace. He goes wrapped in his triumph like a furry glove, and in his pocket rocks the shining rose.

AUGUST KADOW