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## The Long Party

Winfield Townley Scott

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## *NMQ Poetry Selections*

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### THE LONG PARTY

Identification had to be by mask.  
The party went on so long. So long.  
Nobody bared a face. All those lanterns.  
It was maggot-time in the blood trees. Even  
Above the sludge of the sea the sound of it  
Ate among us in crepitant whispers.  
A few desperate errors aside, there were  
No real connections; woman with woman,  
Man with man; relief was agitating.  
'I am too old to dance,' said an old man:  
'Will you dance for me?' To somebody young.  
I'd have sworn nobody was there. Dark.  
Hopefully: 'Old people for contrast at a party.  
But there's no such thing,' he said, 'as a hundred years.'  
In the dusk the children sat discussing death.  
Later they were gone—too late—to bed.  
A wilder surf of music. That—I thought—  
First sounded in a skull two-hands-sized,  
Now it roves the sky. But these were maskers  
Knew how to dance without hearing the music.  
Where the children had hidden I stumbled  
Scattering a pattern of letter-blocks  
Though in that light I doubt I could have read.  
The lawn sloped down to the blue hydrangeas,  
The blue hydrangeas held the sea. Apart,  
I found a clump of laurel I remembered;  
But shriveled. I had dreamed that laurel tall.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT