

BLACK BIRD

A G A Z I N E

*Wake the
World*

Issue 11
August 2013/
September 2013

Inside:
Interview With Valentina Brostean
Artwork by Soma Fazil Hussain
Our Winning Storyteller: Harkness by Jessie Wright
And Much More...



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Late October

Lisa Braiden

The shrouds of browns cover the ground,
Mother Nature's party kegs,
the rustling trees, an autumn sound,
berry, scarlet, the final dregs
of another season.

It's the sweetcorn and peas of autumn trees
and hues of rouge that entice me,
burgundy, amber and sand leaves
loose, tumbling and then free.

Sunflowers bow their heads and
wither like a grandmother,
yellow, plum, maples burn hands
in the sun, destined to discover
a warm-felt reason
to fall.

Fox coloured foliage embraces the scene,
framed by delicate doilies, Maple and Sycamore
boomerang towards my feet, which means
the spectrum of colour lasts no more.



Jan Chave

“This is a theme on healing with colour; my whole work reverberates around colour. I work in all media and put more importance on the mood and feeling the work gives over content.”





Gez Sullivan

**You grace the sky heavy but light,
Through the clouds in dead of night.
Not a flicker, just a glide,
One of the birds that stands for pride.
What do you do during the day?
Dream about your volumtuous prey?
Swooping down so close to the ground,
Your body and feathers not making a sound.
Your prize is waiting and not aware,
That you'll be along to give it a scare.
Prize now caught within your talens;
You retreat to your own barrens,
Were you'll feast another night,
Then re-charge in the morning light.**



Gez Sullivan





Gasel the Stray Dog
Vagabond Log
By Gasel

Hanover, Germany February - March 2011

3 weeks long. Never expected myself in Hanover for this long. Thought of leaving at times, but Renata, Stefan and all the great people I met kept me. One of my daily routines was hanging out at Nordstadbrant (Stefan's bar), where I got to know the most of the people. At the second week, I started to pay for the drinks despite the free offer, because I had already consumed larntal amount of beer at that point. (Didn't want the bar to go bankrupt, I showed them mercy) Hanover in general seemed extremely friendly. It was interesting that every time I met new people, they were open to talk about the war (not in that depth though) and brought it up from themselves, telling me how much they have learnt since back then.

The stereotype of Germans being punctual/organized turned out very true. When I went out with Stefan and some others, they always knew exactly what they would be doing through whole night beforehand. I was introduced to this great product called "Clulamate" - a bottle of drink that keeps you stay awake, but without any of those nasty artificial things that other energy drinks contain. I personally think this thing should replace Redbull throughout the world, especially when I have been abused by Redbull overdose which resulted in three times faster heart beat and agonizing headache.

Huge Turkish community in Hanover fed me so cheap and well. My main diet was 2 Euros falafel roll which I ate every single day. It comes with big portion, very filling and it was a good cure for hangover that I suffered for also every day base, and once again, the city is called Hanover.

Krakow Poland, March 2011

All I knew was I was leaving Hanover on that way. I had absolutely no idea which city I was going to when I was at Euro Line bus ticket counter. The lady looked totally confused when I asked her where I could depart for within half hour. She told me there would be a bus to Krakow in 3 minutes. Then I just cracked it. Quick decision made there. Arrived in Krakow next morning, I didn't even think about how long the ride would be. -16 hours. My back was hurting like hell, I could only flex each joint a little and was awkwardly walking like C-3PO from Star Wars.

When I was wandering around the town (still with that C-3PO walk), my foot was caught by a little step. I fell and hit my knee really hard. I was embarrassed, sat down and moaned for some seconds. Three Polish girls came to me from across the street and asked me if I was okay. They said they could take

me to drug store to get bandages. I was actually really fine after a while, but just to get into some chat with them, I followed them there. I had a heart-attack when one of them said with giggle, "I know you are pretending the pain" which sounded to me like half sarcastic and half for real.

Krakow was a bit more touristy than I had imagined (well, in comparison to Hanover, it surely is). It has calm and nice atmosphere, but I could not exactly be left alone due to the fair amount of tourists. My favorite is "Alchemist Cafe" at the Jewish quarter, with some dark and cozy set-ups. The good thing about the town was that everything was in compact range, which made it easy for me to walk back to the hostel when I was excessively drunk.

Krakow and some excursions, Poland April 2011

Excursion to Auschwitz still remains shocking experience in my mind. It was not as fully preserved as I had thought it would be. Some of the buildings were renovated and turned into museums. Having said it. There was powerful and outrageous impression from it. It's in the air somehow. Even someone without any knowledge or information about the background would feel it. The highlight was one of the chambers where the prisoners were executed. I won't go into any further opinions since this is very sensitive topic, but I would definitely suggest you to pay a visit, to see what humans can do to each other.

Also took an excursion to the salt mine from Krakow with people from the hostel. On the bus I had to pay 50 zloty (about 12 Euros) fine for not punching the ticket. I was mad at the situation. The ticket controller asked me to write signature on the document. I scribbled "fuck you" instead. She looked at it and laughed, it seemed she couldn't be bothered anymore.

One day in Krakow, I ran into pillow fight at the main square which was apparently organized by university students. It was a blast, ton of the feathers that came out from the pillows made Krakow look like a city of angels. Met some Polish people from Gliwice (other town in Poland) on their vacation. We went to few beers together and exchanged the contacts. Krakow had not really been that authentic Polish to me until that point, then some idea came to me. - I could go visit them in Gliwice.







Soma Fazil Hussain



“Born in 1989, I (Soma Fazil Hussain) live in Sulaimaniya, Iraq, and am a student of the Fine Arts. I am passionate about art and have been dabbling in drawing and oil paintings since childhood. I love the Gothic style / colour scheme in this picture and in others on the page. In particular, I enjoy the use of black as a focal point, even in my own art.”

Video Games: The Final Frontier of Storytelling by Oliver Campbell

Oliver Campbell has worked in games journalism for 5 years, for sites EOGamer, Hard 4 Games, and Video Game Scoreboard. In addition, his work has been featured on Kotaku and The Escapist.

*When he's not talking about video games, he and his wife are fiction authors. They've just released the first book in their fantasy epic, *The Twisted World Verse One: The Dusk Harbinger*. They're currently working on the follow-up to their acclaimed 2011 novella, *Rabbit in the Road*.*



Since time immemorial, people have used storytelling in order to achieve one of our primary goals, that of survival. It's funny in a way, isn't it? Not only do we use story to entertain, but we also use it to live. Way, way back in that time, if one person found food, enough to feed their tribe and comes back and tells the rest of the tribe about it, was that not a story?

The ways that we've gone about telling story has grown and changed in incredible and marvelous ways. In the beginning, it was grunts and gestures. It would eventually progress to elaborate pictograms, and after that we began to codify our grunts and various sounds into a spoken language, across many different cultures. We'd then take that spoken language a step further, combining the idea of sounds and pictures into a translation of each other; the written word.

Over time, these things would evolve in interesting and marvelous ways. Simple pictograms would go on to become paintings, and simple language would grow to become speeches, plays, and more. But all of these things have grown out of one simple idea: The need to share and express information with our fellow human beings. To tell story.

I've always found it fascinating that story (at least in the methods that we express it) is a feature, for the most part, unique to human beings. No other creature on this planet shares information in the same way that we do. Even then, a lot of that information can be open to interpretation and debate a great deal of the time, due to the abstract nature of some of the ideas that we exchange.

Each form of storytelling has a very exact reason and purpose. Through the written word, or through voice, the nature of that story is to tell another human being about an event, be it fact or fiction. Through visual media, such as television, graphic novels, and film, we not only tell the story, but also show it to our audience.

These forms of storytelling have been good, to a certain extent. They allow us to communicate those complex

ideas that I've talked about, but even then there tends to be a disconnect between the information and the audience. Signal to noise ratio, as it would be. Video games are beginning to challenge and tackle that problem of noise by doing something that those other forms of storytelling can't do: allow the viewer to live the story. The player of the game has the ability to do what the reader or listener of a story can't do; every single experience that a player has in a game is deep, personal, and intimate. As far as the brain is concerned, the things that a player has done in a game isn't happening to someone else; it's happening to them. They are deeply entrenched and very much a part of that world.

As video games have grown and metamorphosed over the past several decades, their capacity to tell better and more engaging story has grown right along side them. I highly doubt anyone is going to be find any kind of incredibly deep meaning behind Tetris, Peggle, or Bejeweled. Those aren't the experiences that I'm referring to, and a medium should not be judged by all the things that have happened through it. Just as there have been many different books, films, and songs written for all kinds of peculiar and sometimes zany purposes, just as many have been created that have figuratively and literally changed the course of human history.

Isaac Asimov's Runaround introduced us to the idea of "The Three Laws of Robotics." With it, he put forth a very concerning thought about the future of the development of artificial intelligence. It was so impactful that those laws are thought about and still applied today in the real world, because the consequences are quite dire. Furthermore, Philip K. Dick's The Minority Report asked an existential question that has plagued humans since we could study and understand the abstract: do we have free will?

The reason that these things are relevant, is because video games have the capacity to be as complex as these narratives and to share critical information in the same fashion.

Games such as Atlus' Catherine, which explore the idea of what a relationship is like for a man, allow women to cross the gender barrier and see what kind of hardships exist for many men when it comes to intimacy. A game such as Heavy Rain allows someone to explore the pain and anguish that another person would feel through the premature death of one of their children. A game such as Modern Warfare might, for some people, merely be a way to pass the time. But for others it gives them a moment to experience the tiniest feeling of what the hell that is war might be like.

Do not misunderstand me here when I say that video games are the final frontier of storytelling. What I said, in that video games allow us to live the experience, is true. I did not say that the current incarnation of video games was it, however. Just like those other expressive storytelling arts, they too had to go through a period of growth in order to reach their full potential. As video games are so young, we're only now beginning to understand what they can do. But we're hardly done with the medium. Our inputs and how we interface into those systems is incredibly rudimentary right now. Who knows, maybe in 50 years we'll be playing some other game where we can absolutely positively interact in all ways, through all of our senses as opposed to just our hands, eyes, and ears. That time, however, is not today.

The beauty that is the video game is that we will be able to share and experience ideals, realities, and existences that we as individuals have not been able to fathom. Ultimately, it might teach us an important trait that often gets overlooked; empathy. Understanding for our fellow man. We won't just say "Walk a mile in another man's shoes." Now we're getting to the point where we can make that exact thing happen.

I don't know where we're going to end up with video games, I truly don't. But in a world of storytellers it's a vast, open plain of possibilities that we should all be scrambling to stake our own claim upon.

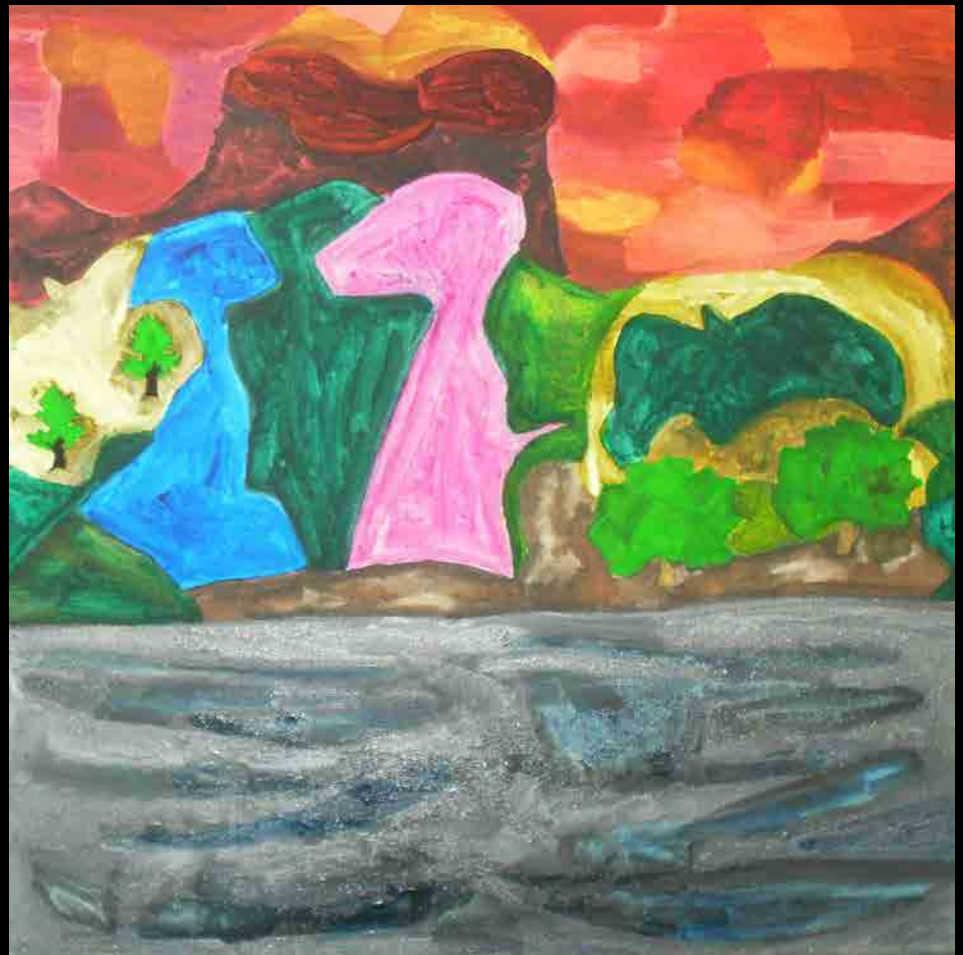
Artwork by S. Splain



Green Light Shines Because of Creativity



End of a Relationship



Tangled Paths Untangled



Two Different Personas



Saying Goodbye



Reaching Destination
Surrounded By Colour Orange

The power of your state of mind is enormous as opposed to what many people would think. This post is the first for this column and will tell you how you can unlock your optimum potential just by keeping a suitable state of mind.

Studies have shown that more than 90% of an individual's potential is never tapped throughout his lifetime. Those of you working 8 office hours every day could be rock stars as well! You can apply the principle of state of mind to almost any competitive task you take on. Weight lifters are known to be more successful when they believe they can lift that weight. Ever noticed how sometimes a wild card entry player in tennis beats the top seeds and get into the quarters or semis. And then he just plays bogus. Not showing even half the finesse he showed throughout the tournament.

It is not only nerves at work here. It is because after all the high paced showdowns, when he finally realizes how far he has come, at the back of his mind, he feels he does not belong there. Do a little exercise yourself and you will notice what I mean. Gather players from a neighborhood for a game you love playing. Go up against a novice first and then against the champ. Regardless of what the results are, your style and quality of play will be a lot better in the first game. This is because you know you have a better chance at a win. While in the second game, knowing you are up against a

Ways of the World: The state of mind

By Aayush Shangari

prodigy, the individual quality of your own play will decrease. Now wonder if you could have won the second game not knowing the stature of the player.

It is common to hear that every battle is won once before it is fought. It happens inside the mind of the warrior. You will have to play like a champ to win like a champ. This is a fact and there is no doubting it. I am sure you all know the famous Chris Angel from T.V. He once lined up some common people and pretended to read tarot cards for them. After the end of the exercise, everyone said they were really satisfied with Chris' conclusions. It was then that Chris himself revealed he knew nothing about tarot card reading. He just told them the most common lines about the life situations of a human being. But the people believed in the craft of the great Chris Angel. So they all embraced what he said and accepted that their personalities were truly as he said they were.

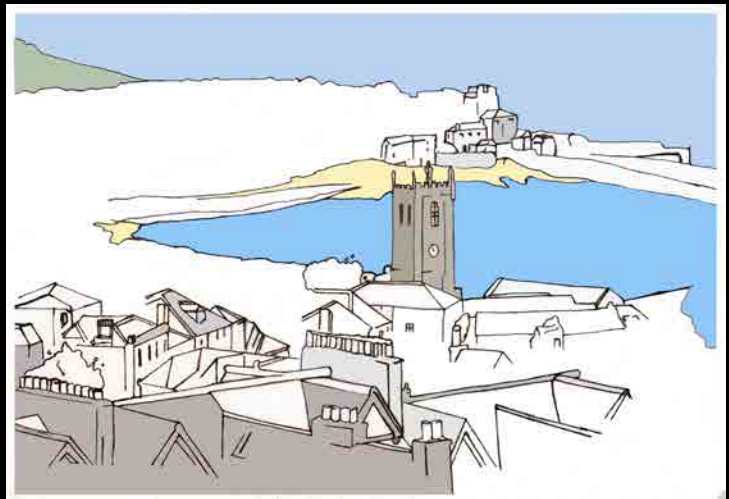
Now how weird is that? This is one of the reasons why the Yankees mostly win. The same theory goes behind the fact that no one denies Lebron James when he lines up a three pointer and so on and so forth. So, from here on, just try to focus a little bit more on the mental and spiritual aspects of a situation. You will definitely have a better chance at winning when you know it is all in the state of mind!

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Screen

Artwork by Alice Bowman



St. Ives Drawing



Together



Gorilla

Harkness

A Novel by Jesse Wright

*So it begins
Again, it begins*

- Relative Extrema, "Tetrahedral"

*Gather 'round and listen, I'll tell ya a story true
About my friend Cat Tom and his talent for blues
There's laughter and tears, some ghosts, a few jeers
Might even find a few of your fears
And when you see the night has slipped into dawn
Will you find your way back if the bread crumbs are gone?*

- Barry 'Oil Slick' Rodgers, "Cat Tom Blues"

I've found the pen is just another needle

- Peacemaker, "Youngstown"

Part One: May through June

The sound of a hammer driving nails into fresh lumber cut swiftly through the wooded valley. It was a beautiful, picturesque southwest Wisconsin morning, and the man in the old blue Carhartt shirt frowned when he saw the plume of dust arising from the long lane that snaked half a mile from the highway to the rectangular paved driveway of the old cabin.

The man snuck another glance up from his roofing work when the car pulled to an easy stop in front of the cabin. He wiped the sweat from his brow and blinked a few times to ensure he'd properly registered what he'd seen below.

Mercedes-Benz, he thought with a frown. Nice one, too. This is worse than I thought.

It wasn't unheard of to be visited by the occasional peddler of time shares, vacuum cleaners or religion, even in a nearly-hidden secluded little spot out here like Deve Harkness had intentionally selected. Watching the man in the tailored suit slide out of his expensive car with a briefcase in his hand, though, made Deve think that he probably wasn't here to bring him to Jesus.

He'd almost hoped it was a lawyer--Deve had experienced a few of those knocking on his door as well, over the years. Most after alimony. None of them wore Italian suits or Ray-Ban sunglasses, though.

"Hello up there," the man below hollered up to him with a wave.

Deve nodded distractedly and pounded another nail into his roof.

"Could I--uh--possibly have a moment of your time?"

"That depends," Deve replied gruffly.

The man below waited for him to complete the thought. He didn't.

"You're a hard one to find," the man below said finally.

Deve stopped what he was doing and closed his eyes, exhaling softly. He does know who I really am. Damn.

Deve had spent the past 17 years going to great lengths to remove himself from the public eye. He went by the name John Hampton these days, and had spent a fortune in selecting a place where he wouldn't be bothered or recognised as a celebrity.

"Why's that?" Deve asked hoarsely, still holding on to a shred of hope that the man was a lawyer, out for money for his second or third estranged wife.

"Mr. Harkness," the man said with a smug grin.

"Who...?" Deve asked in exaggerated fashion, knowing it was futile.

The man below crossed his arms and stared at him.

"My name's John Hampton, buddy. I don't know who you're--"

"And my name, Mr. Harkness, is Stu Lazarus, from Blueschist Records. And, really, I only need a few minutes of your time. I promise. I've driven an awfully long way."

Deve sighed and stared longingly at the remaining section of roof that needed to be patched. He eased himself up onto his knees.

He was quite well aware of who Stu Lazarus was, even before the man had written him a series of letters over the past six months explaining his credentials. As much as he preferred to stay out of the spotlight, even an old recluse like Deve couldn't help but keep half-hearted tabs on industry

news, just to see if his name ever came up anymore. Stu had established himself over the past five years as the predominant hotshot young American music promoter. Lazarus was an apt name for him, they said--the guy seemed to specialize in bringing bands back from the dead.

His most recent success had been a big one. Two years before, Stu had somehow gotten all five original members of legendary 80's hair-metal band Peacemaker to agree to a four city mini-tour. Previously the band--primarily frontman Michael Jennings and lead guitarist Gil Gear--could barely stand being in the same state as one another, let alone the intimate confines of a tour bus. But Lazarus had not only convinced them to hit the road again, but by the end of the four city tour the aged men were practically begging for more punishment. Peacemaker soon embarked on an eighteen month worldwide tour and was currently in the studio recording their first new album in more than 25 years.

Barely in his mid-20's himself, Stu had been building a solid reputation in the industry as a man who could make the impossible deal, a persuasive and extraordinarily-patient young executive who could somehow find a way to breathe new life into these classic bands. And Deve Harkness was his white whale.

"Please, Mr. Harkness. I'll be brief. Scout's honor," Stu said, raising his right hand.

Deve stared at him coldly for a long moment, then finally eased himself back down into a sitting position.

"How are you with a hammer?" He called down finally.

Behind the Canvas: *Valentina Brostean*

By Mimi Chakrabarty

Prolific artist Valentina Brostean was happy to share her body of work with Black Bird Magazine, and to share some stories about her involvement in the Arts. Drawing from her fantastical well of ideas, Brostean has fancied herself to be a “modest missionary” and much like “a fearless warrior” in her “exciting quest of discovery and creation.”

She explained that it was only after her Master’s studies that she was able to “fully devote” herself to painting and illustration – a period prior to which she found herself dabbling in graphic design and commercial projects for financial support. However, in time, she has slowly moved over to “more personal” works in various media: “painting, drawing, digital illustration,” and more. Brostean seeks creative venues to explore nuances in style “without any limitations” and has looked to use her artistic potential as the foundation for her career path.

Although Brostean claimed she had had no specific role models of note influencing her work as it developed, she did express gratitude for her parents’ continued support of her endeavours. When asked about styles and techniques, she stated, “I am very eclectic; I love work[ing] with paint, [really feeling] the brushes, canvas and raw materials, [as well as creating] digital illustration[s] with Photoshop.”

As she delved into what she wishes to achieve with each piece, she explained that her inspiration “comes from a need to tell a story,” a process of life that “demands courage[,] love and devotion.” She aspires to render a descriptive flavour to her work, in “honest” portrayal of contemporary society. Despite the fairy-like landscapes in her paintings, she asserts, the underlying theme is intended to be figurative representation of the modern



“Battle for Love”,
acrylic on canvas, 100 x 70 cm, 2012



everyday life. Brostean attempts to unmask various facets of the human condition and demonstrate a unifying harmony for all of society.

Even with her work being shown across the world and her emerging role in the international arts scene, Brostean insists she is always extremely critical of her own work and quality of ideas. “[I demand a] very high level of professionalism” from myself,” she stated. She also takes technicality of idea execution into careful consideration during the creation process. Although her “representative gallery” is in Italy, she does several “collective shows” around the world. Her crosscultural audiences are able to enjoy the “adventure and discovery” of prospect and possibility in her work, while also appreciating the harmony of the style. Brostean explained that she incorporates what people have described as a distinctly recognizable “disturbing moment” in her pieces, all of which are myriad expressions of her imagination, personal life-stories and philosophies.

As many others leading their lives with inspiration as a guide, Brostean finds it is the “pure joy of creation” that is the most fulfilling aspect of her work. She hopes to hone her skills, and to be able to acquire even wider audience for her art in time, and later perhaps even to venture into the field of graphic novel or book illustration to expand her horizons.



A PAINFUL DIVIDE

by Aayush Shangari

*Holding onto a faint remembrance
Of the wretched night of unholy temptation
Still feeling the tingle of the creature's fragrance
I sit, so caught up in mesmerisation*

*That night turned dark too soon
Gloomy and stark to the purest degree
A shady apparition courtesy the moon
Was the maiden companion moving with me*

*Losing my way had I entered that world
Of thronging clouds and noisy leaves
And slowly tread, as in darkness when hurled
The jungle noise your firmness cleaves*

*I saw her through the haze
A blazing fire in a chilly current
Her visage held the moon in daze!
Her eyes, deceptively innocent*

*For ages, she didn't speak, nor I
Her eyes hid a secret, her bosom, mischief
Then finally on her softest cry
I advanced with steps a brief*

*She tip-toed on the rocks, I followed
Howling gargoyles could be heard aloud
But she was fearless while her hallowed
Beauty floated over mystical peaks as a cloud*

*Having to rest, we sat by a tree
Catching our breath with deep drawn sighs
For miles ahead, there was nothing to see
Or maybe none else could meet our eyes*

*With a gentle wave, her hand
Touched – Ah! That first touch – mine
With that gesture indeed she had
Said in a way, "My heart is thine"*

*Then I swooned and she stood with poise
Glided herself in a majestic dance
Conjured up music from jungle noise
Holding me in a dream, a trance*

*The forest was casting spells above
I stood up and we moved together
Giving rise to the truest love
Yes, the spells of love they were*

*Leaving no threshold of closeness un-cleared
Suddenly she stopped and seemed to wail
As if to say, "I am sorry my dear"
And my legs felt so frail*

*Weak, and losing the sense of reality
On her divine scent, I was high
Hugging softly, she vowed to release me
And all she did was cry and cry*

*Still, when dreaming of that faint remem-
brance
While I sleep under the dotted sky
She meets me with her divine fragrance
But all she does is cry and cry and cry*



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