

## PROLOGUE

Saint Francis always danced - from the pride of life to the apocalypse of death. He moved through hours of song, wine, sun, fiesta; through terrifying emptiness, sickness of mind, of soul, of body. Saint Francis knew vivacity, poetic elegance; he was shattered in every part of being and body. He was debonair, extravagant, generous; he became a beggar standing on a friendless street, alone, hopeless, oozing loneliness and despair. St. Francis flowed, cascaded; he danced into an abyss.

## ST. FRANCIS POEM

There are five scenes:

- I. The Vaulting Pride of Life; the locale is the public square.
- II. The Desolated Wretchedness of Life as experienced in the Dark Night of the Soul; the locale is on the outskirts of his village.
- III. The Vaulting Vitality of Spirit - A Father is lost and friends are found; the locale is again the public square.
- IV. Mission of Holy Madness to the Moslem World; the locale is the Court of a Powerful Sultan.
- V. Stigmata, Death, Apocalypse; the locale is near his monastery.

## SCENE I

Wild, elegant Francis dances, eats, sings, drinks, plays in the piazza filled with friends celebrating the rush of earth and air to the drunken glory of summer madness.

The volcano belches in baleful colors, burning stones, loathsome dust - War. The friends fearfully run to the wombs of caves. Francis remains and glories in the violent pride of the knightly warrior.

### INTIMATION:

Here is the apocalypse of blood  
Fingertips yell into the sails of nails  
Voices explode from congealed prisons  
The shouting ferment lurches fiercely into the fecund piazza.

These are not sons and daughters of the mothering sea whose love changes the red, raw intricacy of heart into the alien eye of a fish. The firm, lush, deceptive grape is their mother and the sun fathers them in a volcano.

They froth forth in wind-rush song from madcap arteries and exploding veins; jasmine, sap, musk, juice, grape, volcano erupt in the fire and clasp of the tarantella

And

Soaring in is Francis  
cavalier of the allegro  
litany of grace  
singer of bird song  
prince of incandescence  
gorgeous tapestry  
With feet of bird flight, peacock arch  
Hands of sun that race with butterflies  
Arms of quiet power - subtle tides of flowing strength.  
Legs that send with stallion rush and surge into airy countries and return  
with the delicate bow of flowers in gentle rain  
A back of pride, pliant to passion  
Neck of reaching elegance  
A head of harmony and light  
And eyes of a tiger.

SCENE I CONTINUED:

Francis moves.

How does a bird fly through forests of flowers, over oceans of wine, showers of burning ash? How does a child walk on waters of salmon and sharks? How does a sandpiper dare to dance on the land of the fish-filled sea lion patrolling his kingdom of monsters and ships? How does a lamb innocently walk on thoroughfares of rabbits and panthers? How does a tiger stalk among trees and kind grass proud of his gift of death?

## SCENE II

Francis returns in a mystery of desolation. Although he is wretched, his circus soul seeks a tigress with claws of pearl.

### INTIMATION:

Francis returns in a mystery of desolation.

In a dark, falling doom  
Tenebrous with the pitch  
of desolated ache,  
In a contorted wretching  
of shattered bowels

He hears the groans of the gnarled,  
Smells the pus of corruption,  
bleeds from the thorns of tenements,  
lurches through docks of agony,  
falls into the cheerless abysses of grave-quiet holds,  
trembles from the remorseless clanking of brittle metals,  
fears the indifferent swing of uncaring booms that ferry cargoes of despair,

There is no song from the sun, no flowers, no Regina Coeli, no vibrant rustling of warm feathers.

The fire is out; the ash is gray, cold, cold; the flow is ended; the grave damp is inside, inside.

Where is the warm breast of the brooding Paraclete? Where are the bursting shouts of fathers, the boisterous play of brothers? There is only a bleak beach of forlorn gulls with broken wings.

He reaches with his circus soul of acrobats and peacocks for a tigress with claws of pearl

The circus soul of zebras, peacocks, spangles,  
rainbows, shining brass, echoing bells, flies,  
a dazzling angel on a trapeze,

Over knotted jungles, malign swamps,  
into the grass glory  
of the sin designed  
death striped

tigress  
singing her murderous cantata  
of life  
dancing her epiphany of fire

SCENE II CONTINUED:

The tigress with claws of pearl  
overwhelms the circus soul and the  
circus soul explodes into the  
being of the sun designed,  
death striped tigress  
in a wild extravagance of color,  
in a violent beat of  
savage ecstasy  
Burning blood gushes, smokes  
Stacatto hearts hammer bone,  
gash muscle  
And the circus soul  
learns  
the dance of flaming ash.

### SCENE III

Francis returns to the world of friendly murder. He rejects his father and finds warmth among disciples, birds and animals. Francis sings and dances. When he dances, his songs breathe. When he sings, his songs dance. Francis is the Vaudevillian. He moves to simple song and delightfully skips into a heart.

#### INTIMATION:

Francis returns,  
to the world of ordered stone and  
stable ritual  
that creates the fresh buoyant style  
of brotherly destruction.  
His tigress torn soul is brought  
to a cage  
His flaming ash soul burns  
through the stone and iron  
of his blood father's rage  
The ash flame soul,  
a wild ecstatic beat  
on a jungle torn drum,  
a thunderous blood borne  
madness of an insane tom-tom  
mystifies the many  
who are drawn  
to the rhythm of the vaudevillian  
who moves to simple song  
and delightfully  
skips into a heart.

There is:

Juniper, a hardy wild flower  
an exuberant climate of wild, tangy air, filled with the zeal of wheeling  
tumblers, captive of jocundity, a tattered delight of days of dense reaching  
trees, rioting singing rocks, shivering, passionate earth.

Leo, gentle, shy, a delicate dancer in light, kind air.

Giles, a merry ball of simple mischief, darting, skipping,  
bouncing with the play of life.

SCENE III CONTINUED:

Clara, a harmony of beatitude,  
a gracious swan of mist-borne waters,  
an arabesque of easy, regal flow,  
touch of the moon.

There are the Birds, a caravan of grace,  
people of supple sympathy, of impeccable deportment,  
weavers of angelic patterns.

There is the Wolf who in joy  
descends upon the supplicant flock.  
After he hears the song of Francis, he dances away and returns  
only to joyously sing and dance with the tigress torn fire dancer.



SCENE IV

The Holy Madness of Francis and his disciples leads them to the court  
of a Moslem Caliph.

INTIMATION:

Francis entranced  
by the music of fire drawn chords,  
delighted to dance  
on the coal plains  
of his pain-textured land  
longs to bring  
his caravan of unearthly eclat  
to the world that worships  
cool, running waters, palms  
of shade and grace  
beauty of taste and touch

The motley crew

of eccentric rainbow walkers  
led by their  
fire-torn  
exuberant

scare crow

amaze and delight the sons  
and daughters of palm and sand.

The courtyard of palm and sand,

sways, rocks  
with the delight and shock  
of the ragged zealots

When the sons and daughters of palm and sand  
senuously, sumptuously  
weave the strands of their magic carpet -  
wind borne  
sun scented  
moon haunted  
sand stretched.

And the enchanted ragamuffins  
cannot protest  
as they are graciously dismissed  
from the land  
of palm and sun.

SCENE V

Francis experiences the Stigmata, feels the decline of his racked body,  
dies into his apocalypse.

INTIMATION:

Francis yearns  
to dance again  
with the sun designed  
death striped  
tigress with claws of pearl.  
He reaches through  
the smoke of fire coals  
and finds  
a world of shattering intensity  
that his body  
cannot contain  
Here is his holy piazza -  
artery and vein  
cannot contain the rip,  
the tear,  
the claw  
of his lashing soul.

The exultant dance drains  
the vivacity of the lurching  
tornado racked Francis  
aching  
to give his blood to all  
who are torn by the fangs  
of the world.

The cruel ghosts of the knotted jungle  
and malign swamps  
invade his being  
His warrior soul creates  
warm, golden spirits  
to drive them away

SCENE V CONTINUED:

His body falls  
under the blood drenched press  
of his rainbow lighted tigress.

His only movement is  
the dance of his tiger eyes.

Can we say Francis died?  
His tiger eyes closed,  
through his wounds  
roared the violent explosion  
of his shattering rush  
of bone, blood, soul, fury  
into the mystery  
of the apocalypse.