

DEATH CAME TO THE WOODEN HORSE MICHAEL

Music: Joseph Tal
Text: Nathan Zach

Death came to the wooden horse Michael as dawn broke in the morning and the wooden horse Michael was not as yet completely prepared to go with him. "Come with me, wooden horse Michael," said Death to him, but the wooden horse Michael went up the mountains and down the valleys.

The sun had risen long since and had lit up the devastation on every side. From horizon to horizon you could not see any sign of life. "Come with me," said Death to the wooden horse Michael.

The fisherman went down to the shore and worked at mending nets. Loop within loop. Fat fish rested on the sand and in the caressing sunlight. The heat stretched out on the remains of the night like a stone on sea-weed.

"Come with me, wooden horse Michael," said Death. In the trenches, heads cracked open like nuts could be seen. Drops of water dripped on the rock like pins in living flesh.

"Come with me," said Mr. Death, with tears in his eyes, and began to sing:

Wooden horse Michael, wooden horse Michael.
One burns with desire, another one weighs,
One sinks in the mire, another one pays.
Come with me, come with me, wooden horse Michael.

And this fine horse, this beloved horse Michael, lifted his voice in answering song:

Without knowing it the train is on the move,
Without knowing it the girl is in love,
Without knowing it God hovers above.

But Death responds:

Wooden horse Michael.
Far off at the sea-shore there's much water.
Come now and I'll take you straight up to heaven.
I know of one simple magic spell.
Come out of exile, wooden horse Michael.

And the chorus of voices continues rhythmically:

In the bottle there's much water
Many hands have touched the letter.
There's a queue in the office but no redeemer.
Wooden horse Michael, wooden horse Michael.

(con't)

And Death returns:

No conditions, no limits did my love for her set
And therefore there were two of us.
And now that she's gone and I'm sad unto death
May the heavens have mercy on me.

The poet is forced to add:

There are pictures in the album and a corner in the heart
And a hollow therein where melodies start

And all the angels return with a devout, frenzied outcry:

There are pictures in the album and a corner in the heart
And a hollow therein where melodies start
Wooden horse Michael, wooden horse Michael
See the heart of Death confused.

And the wooden horse Michael bursts out with a terrible roar of grief.
What is done cannot be undone:

I was here. That's clear as the shadows.
No questions are asked about what I have said.
And as I've done wrong, so will do other men.
Who will come with me up the mountain again.

Having hinted at the story of Jephtha's daughter, the poet declares:
If the father is cruel, Jephtha's daughter's to blame.
Jephtha's daughter's to blame, wooden horse Michael.
There's no one that loves you more than the shadows.

And feeling his heart to be torn asunder, he exclaimed:

In silence. In silence In silence. In silence.
In silence (it's surprising) the Chanukkia is burning.
In the hollow. In the hollow. In the hollow. In the hollow
Lies the poison death will follow.
If you've seen what you've seen, what you've seen -
Never more can you be what you've been.

And the fine horse, ah, this beloved horse, Michael, follows Death
slowly with downcast head.

And Death goes before him while, from the sides, the witches urge:

Tell her now. Why do you wait?
Your days are like a passing shadow. Why do you wait?
Out of the wood the flower strains. Of the heart but ice remains.
Tell her now. Why do you wait?
Tell the legend of the winsome horse.
Tell the legend of the wooden horse Michael.
And how, woe to us all, he was swallowed by shadows.