

The Prairie Light Review

Volume 9
Number 2 *Sisyphus Invents the Moon*

Article 13

Spring 5-1-1990

Noon of a Hamadryad

Rosemary Formolo
College of DuPage

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr>

Recommended Citation

Formolo, Rosemary (1990) "Noon of a Hamadryad," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 9 : No. 2 , Article 13.
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol9/iss2/13>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact orenick@cod.edu.

NOON OF A HAMADRYAD

Rosemary Formolo

The hamadryad could not understand why the women slept on beds. Her body fitted the down and upward thrust of the oak branch with a lovely ease. She lay looking up at the cool canopy of polished leaves that shielded her from the fierce, midday sun. She smiled. She drowsed. It was hot. A corner of the pool shone brass in the sun. A locust called the hour, rising to a shrill and reedy eloquence, then ebbed, down and down into a lower, more comforting key. Then stopped. The lashes of the hamadryad closed softly over the violet eyes. The fleece of her unloosened hair hung still.

And some time later, there came down the back road the boy Antonio. He had seen the ladies take their departure, and knew the garden would be rid of their clutter. He entered it and sat down on a little stone seat to gaze with fierce desire at the oak tree.

"Ecco! Come down, *bella donna*," he murmured urgently. "*Poco a poco*. Old ladies, they see you. The old man, he held you. *Bruto!* What a waste. I am young, I am longing for you, beautiful woman in the tree. *Con amore!*"

The hamadryad opened her violet eyes and glanced down at the boy, his hands clasped at the nape of his neck in a charming pose. Above the open shirt collar, his head with ringlets curled as tightly as the hyacinth flower, reminded her of — Eros? Or perhaps a satyr with his swarthy skin and dark, burning eyes. She felt mischievous, amused. She wanted to play with him for a spell.

She began to sing a wordless song, so softly at first that it flowed into the sense like the fragrance of a flower.

Then swiftly she stole down the tree and put her back to it cunningly, keeping herself just out of sight. Her song grew into a melody a mortal could understand, for it had the lilt and rhythm of a dance. Now she moved around the trunk, peeping face to face with Antonio. Her loveliness startled his eyes. Her beauty pierced his heart.

Slowly she revolved around the tree as though half mocking a mortal's notion of a waltz. She held out her floating arms to Antonio, inviting him to the dance.

And so he came to her slowly and they moved together, but not quite touching. He sensed her soft smell, like arbutus. He was afraid to startle her. But whenever with longing or with guile he tried to clasp her hands or draw her near, she eluded him, but still in the measure of the dance.

So he gave up that quest and they circled round and round, by the pool, by the flowers, by the tree with the harmony of a reed in a flowing stream. Sideways she bent her head and sang her song, the song that surged in his blood, that made his heart flutter, that filled him with a wild, exulting happiness. And only the discipline of the dance constrained him. And for a time he was content.

Never was he to know such an exquisite balance between longing and fulfillment.

But at length he paused and flung out his arms wildly to hold her fast. Like the humming bird, the hamadryad darted backwards, just out of reach. The song stopped. The dance was ended. Then, gliding near, she gave him a kiss as fleet as the beat of a moth's wing, but in her wisdom it was also the kiss of forgetfulness.

As Antonio sat by the edge of the pool, he rubbed his head. "*Non mi ricordo,*" he murmured. Something still stirred within him like the warm remembrance of a dream nine-tenths forgotten. But the sweetness of it! It dripped like honey from this dream. He looked speculatively at the oak tree. After awhile he got up, opened the gate, paused long to look back at the garden. He went away then, down the road, with a certain lightness and rhythm to his step, whistling softly but unaware of it, the hamadryad's song.