

ROBINSON JEFFERS: ROAN STALLION/ READ BY MARIAN SELDES

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MUSIC LP

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ROBINSON JEFFERS: ROAN STALLION

FROM "ROAN STALLION, TAMAR AND OTHER POEMS" PUBLISHED BY MODERN LIBRARY, RANDOM HOUSE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9766

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read by Marian Seldes

Poet's Theatre Series No. 1
Produced by Scotti D'Arcy
From 'Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems' published by
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MARIAN SELDES

Marian Seldes made her Broadway debut in Robinson Jeffers "MEDEA," was featured in his "TOWER BEYOND TRAGEDY" as Electra and Phaedra in "THE CRETAN WOMAN." Last June Miss Seldes appeared in concert performance at the Jan Hus Theatre in "AN EVENING OF THE POETRY OF ROBINSON JEFFERS" which featured her as California in "ROAN STALLION." Since then Miss Seldes has recorded "ROAN STALLION" for Folkways Records.

A graduate of the Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theatre, Miss Seldes received high praise in the leading role in the recent production of Eugene O'Neill's "DIFF'RENT" off-Broadway. On Broadway she played John Gielgud's sister in "CRIME AND PUNISHMENT," was featured in "THAT LADY" starring Katherine Cornell and the revival of "COME OF AGE" which starred Judith Anderson. Miss Seldes appeared opposite George C. Scott in "THE WALL" and last season found her in "A GIFT OF TIME" with Henry Fonda. On Television she starred in James Agee's "MR. LINCOLN SERIES" on Omnibus plus numerous other TV appearances which include THE BEST OF MATINEE THEATRE, PLAYHOUSE 90, STUDIO ONE, PLAY OF THE WEEK, THE DEFENDERS, DIRECTIONS 63, etc. Listed among her film credits is the lead in "THE LONELY NIGHT," a documentary film about mental health which constantly plays the art film circuit.

SIDE I Roan Stallion

The dog barked; then she woman stood in the doorway, and hearing iron strike stone down the steep road Covered her head with a black shawl and entered the light rain; she stood at the turn of the road. A nobly formed woman; erect and strong as a new tower; the features stolid and dark But sculptured into a strong grace; straight nose with a high bridge, firm and wide eyes, full chin, Red lips; she was only a fourth part Indian; a Scottish sailor had planted her in young native earth, Spanish and Indian, twenty-one years before. He had named her California when she was born; That was her name; and had gone north.

She heard the hooves and wheels came nearer, up the steep road. The buckskin mare, learning against the breastpiece, plodded into sight round the wet bank. The pale face of the driver followed; the burnt-out eyes; they had fortune in them. He sat twisted

On the seat of the old buggy, leading a second horse by a long halter, a roan, a big one, That stepped daintily; by the swell of the neck, a stallion.

"What have you got, Johnny?" "Maskerel's stallion. Mine now. I won him last night, I had very good luck."

He was quite drunk. "They bring their mares up here now.

I keep this fellow. I got money besides, but I'll not show you." "Did you buy something, Johnny,

For our Christine? Christmas comes in two days, Johnny."

"By God, forgot," he answered laughing.

"Don't tell Christine it's Christmas; after while I get her something, maybe." But California:

"I shared your luck when you lost: you lost me once, Johnny, remember? Tom Dell had me two nights

Here in the house: other times we've gone hungry: now that you've won, Christine will have her

Christmas.

We share your luck, Johnny. You give me money, I go down to Monterey tomorrow,

Buy presents for Christine, come back in the evening. Next day Christmas." "You have wet ride," he answered

Giggling. "Here money. Five dollar; ten; twelve dollar.

You buy two bottles of rye whisky for Johnny."

"All right. I go to-morrow."

He was an outcast Hollander; not old, but shriveled with bad living.

The child Christine inherited from his race blue eyes, from his life a wizened forehead; she watched From the house-door her father lurch out of the buggy and lead with due respect the stallion

To the new corral, the strong one; leaving the wearily breathing buckskin mare to his wife to unharness.

Storm in the night; the rain on the thin shakes of the roof like the ocean on rock streamed battering; once thunder

Walked down the narrow canyon into Carmel valley and wore away westward; Christine was wakeful With fears and wonders; her father lay too deep for storm to touch him.

Dawn comes late in the year's dark, Later into the crack of a canyon under redwoods; and California slipped from bed An hour before it; the buckskin would be tired; there was a little barley, and why should Johnny Feed all the barley to his stallion? That is what he

would do. She tiptoed out of the room. Leaving her clothes, he'd waken if she waited to put them on, and passed from the door of the house into the dark of the rain; the big black drops were cold through the thin shift, but the wet earth Pleasant under her naked feet. There was a pleasant smell in the stable; and moving softly, Touching things gently with the supple bend of the unclothed body, was pleasant. She found a box, Filled it with sweet dry barley and took it down to the old corral. The little mare sighed deeply At the rail in the darkness; and California returning between two redwoods up to the house Heard the happy jaws grinding the grain. Johnny could mind the pigs and chickens. Christine called to her When she entered the house, but slept again under her hand She laid the wet night-dress on a chair-back And stole into the bedroom to get her clothes. A plank creaked, and he wakened. She stood motionless Hearing him stir in the bed. When he was quiet she stooped after her shoes, and he said softly, "What are you doing? Come back to bed." "It's late, I'm going to Monterey, I must hitch up." "You come to bed first. I been away three days. I give you money, I take back the money..." An what you do in town?" She sighed sharply and came to the bed.

He reaching his hands from it Felt the cool curve and firmness of her flank, and half rising caught her by the long wet hair. She endured, and to hasten the act she feigned desire; she had not for long, except in dream, felt it. Yesterdays drunkenness had made him sluggish and exacting; she saw, turning her head sadly, desire; she had not for long, except in dream, felt it. The windows were bright gray with dawn; he embraced her still, stopping to talk about the stallion. At length she was permitted to put on her clothes. Clear daylight over the steep hills; Gray-shining cloud over the tops of the redwoods; the winter stream sang loud; the wheels of the buggy Slipped in deep slime, ground on washed stones at the road-edge. Down the hill the wrinkled river smothered the ford. You must keep to the bed of stones: she knew the way by willow and alder: the buckskin halted mid-stream, Shuddering, the water her own color washing up to the traces; but California, drawing up Her feet out of the whirl onto the seat of the buggy swung the whip over the yellow water And drove to the road.

All morning the clouds were racing northward like a river. At noon they thickened. When California faced the southwind home from Monterey it was heavy with level rainfall. She looked seaward from the foot of the valley; red rays cried sunset from a trumpet of streaming Cloud over Lobos, the southwest occident of the solstice. Twilight came soon, but the tired mare Feared the road more than the whip. Mile after mile of slow gray twilight.

Then, quite suddenly, darkness. "Christine will be asleep. It is Christmas Eve. The ford.

That hour of daylight wasted this morning!" She could see nothing; she let the reins lie on the

dashboard and knew at length by the cramp of the wheels And the pitch down, they had reached it. Noise of wheels on stones, plashing of hooves in water; a world Of sounds; no sight; the gentle thunder of water; the mare snorting, dipping her head, one knew, To look for footing, in the blackness, under the stream. The hushing and creaking of the sea-wind In the passion of invisible willows.

The mare stood still; the woman shouted to her; spared whip, For a false leap would lose the track of the ford. She stood. "The baby's things," thought California. "Under the seat: the water will come over the floor"; and rising in the midst of the water She tilted the seat; fetched up the doll, the painted wooden chickens, the woolly bear, the book Of many pictures, the box of sweets: she brought them all from under the seat and stored them, trembling, Under her clothes, about the breasts, under the arms; the corners of the cardboard boxes Cut into the soft flesh; but with a piece of rope for a girdle and wound about the shoulders All was made fast. The mare stood still as if asleep in the midst of the water. Then California Reached out a hand over the stream and fingered her rump; the solid wet convexity of it Shook like the beat of a great heart. "What are you waiting for?" But the feel of the animal surface Had wakened a dream, obscured real danger with a dream of danger. "What for? for the water-stallion

To break out of the stream, that is what the rump strains for, him to come up flinging foam sidewise, Fore-hooves in air, crush me and the rig and curl over his woman." She flung out with the whip then; The mare plunged forward. The buggy drifted sidelong: was she off the ground? Swimming? No: by the splashes.

The driver, a mere prehensile instinct, clung to the sideirons of the seat and felt the force But not the coldness of the water, curling over her knees, breaking up to the waist Over the body. They'd turned. The mare had turned up stream and was wallowing back into shoal water.

Then California dropped her forehead to her knees, having seen nothing, feeling a danger, And felt the brute weight of a branch of alder, the pendulous light leaves brush her bent neck Like a child's fingers. The mare burst out of the water and stopped on the slope to the ford.

The woman climbed down Between the wheels and went to her head. "Poor Dora," she called her by name, "there, Dora. Quietly,"

And led her around, there was room to turn on the margin, the head to the gentle thunder of the water.

She crawled on hands and knees, felt for the ruts, and shifted the wheels into them. "You can see, Dora.

I can't. But this time you'll go through it." She climbed into the seat and shouted angrily.

The mare
 Stopped, her two forefeet in the water. She touched
 with the whip. The mare plodded ahead and halted.
 Then California thought of prayer: "Dear little
 Jesus,
 Dear baby Jesus born tonight, your head was
 shining
 Like silver candles. I've got a baby too, only a
 girl. You had light wherever you walked.
 Dear baby Jesus give me light." Light streamed:
 rose, gold rich purple, hiding the ford like a
 curtain.
 The gentle thunder of water was noise of wing-
 feathers, the fans of paradise lifting softly.
 The child afloat on radiance had a baby face, but
 the angels had birds' heads, haws' heads,
 Bending over the baby, weaving a web of wings
 about him. He held in the small fat hand
 A little snake with golden eyes, and California
 could see clearly on the under radiance
 The mare's pricked ears, a sharp black fork
 against the shining light-fall. But it dropped;
 the light of heaven
 Frightened poor Dora. She backed; swung up the
 water,
 And nearly oversetting the buggy turned and
 scrambled backward; the iron wheel-tires rang
 on boulders.
 Then California weeping climbed between the
 wheels. Her wet clothes and the toys packed
 under
 Dragged her down with their weight; she stripped
 off cloak and dress and laid the baby's things
 in the buggy;
 Brought Johnny's whisky out from under the seat;
 wrapped all in the dress, bottles and toys,
 and tied them
 Into a bundle that would sling over her back. She
 unharnessed the mare, hurting her fingers
 Against the swollen straps and wet buckles. She
 tied the pack over her shoulders, the cords
 Crossing her breasts, and mounted. She drew
 up her shift about her waist and knotted it,
 naked thighs
 Clutching the sides of the mare, bare flesh to
 the wet withers, and caught the mane with
 her right hand,
 The looped-up bridle-reins in the other. "Dora,
 the baby gives you light." The blinding radiance
 Hovered the ford. "Sweet baby Jesus give us
 light." Cataracts of light and Latin singing
 Fell through the willows; the mare snorted and
 reared: the roar and thunder of the invisible
 water;
 The night shaking open like a flag, shot with the
 flashes; the baby face hovering; the water
 Beating over her shoes and stocking up to the
 bare thighs; and over them, like a beast
 Lapping her belly; the wriggle and pitch of the
 mare swimming; the drift, the sucking water;
 the blinding
 Light above and behind with not a gleam before,
 in the throat of darkness; the shock of the
 fore-hooves
 Striking bottom, the struggle and surging lift
 of the haunches. She felt the water streaming
 off her
 From the shoulders down; heard the great strain

sob of the mare's breathing, heard the horse-
 shoes grind on gravel.
 When California came home the dog at the door
 snuffed at her without barking; Christine and
 Johnny
 Both were asleep; she did not sleep for hours,
 but kindled fire and knelt patiently over it.
 Shaping and drying the dear-bought gifts for
 Christmas morning.
 She hated (she thought) the proud-necked stallion.
 He'd lean the big twin masses of his breast on
 the rail, his red-brown eyes flash the white
 crescents,
 She admired him then, she hated him for his use-
 lessness, serving nothing
 But Johnny's vanity. Horses were too cheap to
 breed. She thought, if he could range in
 freedom,
 Shaking the red-roan mane for a flag on the bare
 hills
 A man
 brought up a mare in April;
 Then California, though she wanted to watch,
 stayed with
 Christine indoors. When the child fretted
 The mother told her once more about the miracle
 of the ford; her prayers to the little Jesus
 The Christmas Eve when she was bringing the
 gifts home; the appearance, the lights, the
 Latin singing,
 The thunder of wing-feathers and water, the
 shining child, the cataracts of splendor down
 the darkness.
 "A little baby," Christine asked, "the God is a
 baby?" "The child of God. That was his birthday.
 His mother was named Mary: we prayed to her too:
 God came to her. He was not the child of a man
 Like you or me. God was his father: she was the
 stallion's wife -- what did I say -- God's wife."
 She said with a cry, lifting Christine aside, pacing
 the planks of the floor. "She is called more
 blessed
 Than any woman. She was so good, she was more
 loved."
 "Did God live near her house?" "He lives
 Up High, over the stars; he ranges on the bare blue
 hills of the sky." In her mind a picture
 Fleshed, of the red-roan mare shaken out for a flag
 on the bare hills, and she said quickly, "He's more
 Like a great man holding the sun in his hand." Her
 mind giving her words the lie, "But no one
 Knows only the shining and the power. The power,
 the terror, the burning fire covered her over."
 "Was she burnt up, mother?" "She was so good
 and lovely, she was the mother of the little Jesus.
 If you are good nothing will hurt you." "What did
 she think?" "She loved, she was not afraid of
 the hooves --
 Hands that made the hills and sun and moon, and the
 sea and the great redwoods, the terrible strength,
 She gave herself without thinking." "You only saw
 the baby, mother?" "Yes, and the angels about
 him,
 The great wild shining over the black river."
 Three times she had walked to the door, three
 times returned,
 And now the hand that had thrice hung on the knob,

full of prevented action, twisted the cloth
Of the child's dress that she had been mending.
"Oh, Oh, I've torn it." She struck at the child
and then embraced her
Fiercely, the small blond sickly body.

Johnny, came in, his face
reddened as if he had stood
Near fire, his eyes triumphing. "Finished," he
said, and looked with malice at Christine, "I go
Down valley with Jim Carrier; owes me five
dollar, fifteen

I change him, he brought ten in his pocket.
Has grapes on the ranch, maybe I take a barrel
red wine instead of money. Be back to-morrow.
To-morrow night I tell you -- Eh, Jim," he
laughed over his shoulder, "I say to-morrow
evening

I show her how the red fellow act, the big fellow.
When I come home." She answered nothing,
but stood

In front of the door, holding the little hand of her
daughter, in the path of sun between the
redwoods,

While Johnny tied the buckskin mare behind
Carrier's buggy, and bringing saddle and
bridle tossed them

Under the seat. Jim Carrier's mare, the bay,
stood with dropped head and started slowly,
the men

Laughing and shouting at her; their voices could
be heard down the steep road, after the noise
Of the iron-hooped wheels died from the stone.

Then one might hear the hush of the wind in
the tall redwoods,
The tinkle of the April brook, deep in its hollow.

SIDE II

Humanity is the
start of the race; I say
Humanity is the mold to break away from, the
crust to break through, the coal to break into
fire,

The atom to be split.

Tragedy that breaks man's
face and a white fire flies out of it; vision that
fools him

Out of his limits, desire that fools him out of
his limits, unnatural crime, inhuman science,
Slit eyes in the mask; wild loves that leap over
the walls of nature, the wild fence-vaulter
science,

Useless intelligence of far stars, dim knowledge
of the spinning demons that make an atom,
These break, these pierce, these deify, praising
their God shrilly with fierce voices: not in
man's shape

He approves the praise, he that walks lightening
- naked on the

Pacific, that laces the sun with planets,
The heart of the atom with electrons: what is
humanity in this cosmos? For him, the last
Least taint of a trace in the dregs of the solution;
for itself, the mold to break away from, the
coal

To break into fire, the atom to be split.

After the child slept, after
the leopard-footed evening

Had glided oceanward, California turned the lamp
to its least flame and glided from the house.
She moved sighing, like a loose fire, backward and
forward on the smooth ground by the door.
She heard the night-wind that draws down the valley
like the draught in a flue under clear weather
Whisper and toss in the tall redwoods; she heard
the tinkle of the April brook deep in its hollow.
Cooled by the night the odors that the horses had
left behind were in her nostrils; the night
Whitened up the bare hill; a drift of coyotes by the
river cried bitterly against moonrise;
Then California ran to the old corral, the empty
one where they kept the buckskin mare,
And leaned, and bruised her breasts on the rail,
feeling the sky whiten. When the moon stood
over the hill

She stole to the house. The child breathed quietly.
Herself: to sleep? She had seen Christ in the
night at Christmas

The hills were shining open to the enormous night
of the

April moon: empty and empty,
The vast round backs of the bare hills. If one
should ride up high might not the Father himself
Be seen brooding his night, cross-legged, chin
in hand, squatting on the last dome? More likely
Leaping the hills, shaking the red-roan mane for
a flag on the bare hills. She blew out the lamp.
Every fiber of flesh trembled with faintness when
she came to the door; strength lacked, to wander
Afoot into the shining of the hill, high enough,
high enough -- the hateful face of a man had taken
The strength that might have served her, the corral
was empty. The dog followed her, she caught him
by the collar,

Dragged him in fierce silence back to the door of
the house, latched him inside.

It was like daylight
Out-doors and she hastened without faltering down
the footpath, through the dark fringe of twisted
oak-brush,

To the open place in a bay of the hill. The dark
strength of the stallion had heard her coming;
she heard him

Blow the shining air of his nostrils, she saw him
in the white lake of moonlight

Move like a lion along the timbers of the fence,
shaking the nightfall

Of the great mane; his fragrance came to her;
she leaned on the fence;

He drew away from it, the hooves making soft
thunder in the trodden soil.

Wild love had trodden it, his wrestling with the
stranger, the shame of the day

Had stamped it into mire and powder when the
heavy fetlocks

Strained the soft flanks. "Oh, if I could bear
you!

If I had the strength. O great God that came
down to

Mary, gently you came. But I will ride him
Up into the hills, if he throws me, if he tramples
me, is it not my desire

To endure death?" She climbed the fence, press-
ing her body against the rail, shaking like fever,
And dropped inside to the soft ground. He neither
threatened her with his teeth nor fled from her

coming,
 And lifting her hand gently to the upflung head she
 caught the strap of the headstall,
 That hung under the quivering chin. She unlooped
 the halter from the high strength of the neck
 And the arch the storm-cloud mane hung with live
 darkness.
 He stood; she crushed her breasts
 On the hard shoulder, an arm over the withers,
 the other under the mass of his throat, and
 murmuring
 Like a mountain dove, "If I could bear you." No
 way, no help, a gulf in nature. She murmured,
 "Come,
 We will run on the hill. O beautiful, O beautiful,"
 and led him to the gate and flung the bars on
 the ground. He threw his head downward
 To snuff at the bars; and while he stood, she
 catching mane and withers with all sudden
 contracture
 And strength of her lithe body, leaped, clung hard,
 and was mounted. He had been ridden before;
 he did not
 Fight the weight but ran like a stone-falling;
 Broke down the slope into the moon-glass of the
 stream, and flattened to his neck
 She felt the branches of a buck-eye tree fly over
 her, saw the wall of the oak-scrub
 End her world: but he turned there, the matted
 branches
 Scraped her right knee, the great slant shoulders
 Laboring the hill-slope, up, up, the clear hill.
 Desire had died in her
 At the first rush, the falling like death, but now
 it revived,
 She feeling between her thighs the labor of the
 great engine, the running muscles, the hard
 swiftness,
 She riding the savage and exultant strength of
 the world.
 Having topped the thicket he turned eastward,
 Running less wildly; and now at length he felt
 the halter when she drew on it; she guided him
 upward;
 He stopped and grazed on the great arch and pride
 of the hill, the silent calvary. A dwarfish
 oakwood
 Climbed the other slope out of the dark unknown
 canyon beyond; the last wind-beaten bush of it
 Crawled up to the height, and California slipping
 from her mount tethered him to it. She stood
 then,
 Shaking. Enormous films of moonlight
 Trailed down from the height. Space, anxious
 whiteness, vastness. Distant beyond conception
 the shining ocean
 Lay light like a haze along the ledge and doubtful
 world's end. Little vapors gleaming, and little
 Darkness on the far chart underfoot symbolized
 wood and valley; but the air was the element,
 the moon -
 Saturate arcs and spires of the air.
 Here in solitude, here on
 the calvary, nothing conscious
 But the possible God and the cropped grass, no
 witness, no eye but that misformed one, the
 moon's past fullness.
 Two figures on the shining hill, woman and
 stallion, she kneeling to him, brokenly adoring.

He cropping the grass, shifting his hooves, or
 lifting the long head to gaze over the world,
 Tranquil and powerful. She prayed aloud, "Oh
 God, I am not good enough, O fear, O strength,
 I am dragged.
 Johnny and other men have had me, and O clean
 power!
 Here am I," he said, falling before him,
 And crawled to his hooves. She lay a long while,
 as if asleep, in reach of the fore-hooves,
 weeping. He avoided
 Her head and the prone body. He backed at first;
 but later plucked the grass that grew by her
 shoulder.
 The small dark head under his nostrils: a small
 round stone, that smelt human, black hair
 growing from it:
 The skull shut the light in it: it was not possible
 for any eyes
 To know what throbbed and shone under the sutures
 of the skull, or a shell full of lightening
 Had scared the roan strength, and he'd have broken
 tether, screaming, and run for the valley.
 The atom bounds-breaking,
 Nucleus to sun, electrons to planets, with recognition
 Not praying, self-equaling, the whole to the whole,
 the microcosm
 Not entering nor accepting entrance, more equally,
 more utterly, more incredibly conjugate
 With the other extreme and greatness; passionately
 preceptive of identity...
 The fire threw - up figures
 And symbols meanwhile, racial myths formed and
 dissolved in it, the phantom rulers of humanity
 That without being are yet more real than what they
 are born of, and without shape, shape that which
 makes them:
 The nerves and flesh go by shadowlike, the limbs
 and the lives shadowlike, these shadows remain,
 these shadows
 To whom temples, to whom churches, to whom
 labors and wars, visions and dreams are dedicate:
 Out of the fire in the small round stone that black
 moss covered, a crucified man writhed up in
 anguish;
 A woman covered by a huge beast in whose mane
 the stars were netted, sun and moon where his
 eyeballs,
 Smiled under the unendurable violation, her throat
 swollen with the storm and blood - flecks
 gleaming
 On the stretched lips; a woman -- no, a dark water,
 split by jets of lightening and after a season
 What floated up out of the furrowed water, a boat,
 a fish, a fire-globe?
 It had wings, the creature,
 And flew against the fountain of lightening, fell
 burnt out of the cloud back to the bottomless
 water...
 Figures and symbols, castlings of the fire, played
 in her brain; but the white fire was essence,
 The burning in the small round shell of bone that
 black hair covered, that lay by the hooves on
 the hilltop.
 She rose at length, she unknotted the halter; she
 walked and led the stallion; two figures, woman
 and stallion,
 Came down the silent emptiness of the dome of the

hill, under the cataract of the moonlight.
 The next night there was moon through cloud. Johnny
 had returned half drunk toward evening, and
 California
 Who had known him for years with neither love nor
 loathing tonight hating him had let the child
 Christine
 Play in the light of the lamp for hours after her
 bedtime; who fell asleep at length on the floor
 Beside the dog; then Johnny: "Put her to bed."
 She gathered the child against her breasts, she
 laid her
 In the next room, and covered her with a blanket.
 The window was white, the moon had risen.
 The mother
 Lay down by the child, but after a moment Johnny
 stood in the doorway. "Come drink." He had
 brought home
 Two jugs of wine slung from the saddle, part
 payment for the stallion's service; a pitcher of it
 Was on the table, and California sadly came and
 emptied her glass. Whisky, she thought,
 Would have erased him till to-morrow; the thin
 red wine...
 "We have good evening," he laughed, pouring it.
 "One glass yet then I show you what the red
 fellow did."
 She moving toward the house-door his eyes
 Followed her, the glass spilled and the red juice
 ran over the table. When it struck the floor-planks
 He heard and looked. "Who stuck the pig?" he
 muttered studidly, "here's blood, here's blood,"
 and trailed his fingers
 In the red lake under the lamplight. While he was
 looking down the door creaked, she had slipped
 out-doors,
 And he, his mouth curving like a fauns, imagined
 the chase under the solemn redwoods, the panting
 And unresistant victim caught in a dark corner. He
 emptied the glass and went out-doors
 Into the dappled lanes of moonlight. No sound but the
 April brook's. "Hey Bruno" he called, "Find her.
 Bruno, go find her." The dog after a little understood
 and quested the man following.
 When California crouching by an oak-bush above
 the house heard them come near (she moved)
 To the open slope and ran down hill. The dog
 barked at her heels, pleased with the game, and
 Johnny
 Followed in silence. She ran down to the new
 corral, she saw the stallion
 Move like a lion along the timbers of the fence, the
 dark arched neck shaking the nightfall
 Of the great mane; she threw herself prone and
 writhed under the bars, his hooves backing away
 from her
 Made muffled thunder in the soft soil. She stood
 in the midst of the corral, panting, but Johnny
 Paused at the fence. The dog ran under it, and
 seeing the stallion move, the woman standing quiet,
 Danced after the beast, with white-toothed feints
 and dashes.
 When Johnny saw the formidable dark strength
 Recoil from the dog, he climbed up over the fence.
 The child Christine waked when her mother left
 her
 And lay half-dreaming, in the half-waking dream
 she saw the ocean come up out of the west

And cover the world, she looked up through the
 clear water at the tops of the redwoods, she
 heard the door creak
 And crept toward light, where it gleamed under
 the crack of the door. She opened the door, the
 room was empty.
 The table-top was red lake under the lamplight.
 The color of it was terrible to her;
 She had seen the red juice drip from a coyote's
 muzzle her father had shot one day in the hills
 And carried him home over the saddle: she looked
 at the rifle on the wall-rack: it was not moved:
 She ran to the door, the dog was barking and the
 moon was shining: she knew wine by the odor
 But the color frightened her, the empty house
 frightened her, she followed down hill in the
 white lane of moonlight
 The friendly noise of the dog. She saw in the big
 horse's corral, on the level shoulder of the hill,
 Black on white, the dark strength of the beast, the
 dancing fury of the dog, and the two others.
 One fled, one followed; the big one charged, roaring;
 one fell under his fore-hooves. She heard her
 mother
 Scream: without thought she ran to the house, she
 dragged a chair past the red pool and climbed
 to the rifle,
 Got it down from the wall and lugged it somehow
 through the door and down the hillside, under
 the hard weight
 Sobbing. Her mother stood by the rails of the
 corral, she gave it to her. On the far side
 The dog flashed at the plunging stallion; in the
 midst of the space the man, slow-moving, like
 a hurt worm
 Crawling, dragged his body by inches toward the
 fence-like.
 Then California, resting the rifle.
 On the top rail, without doubting, without hesitation,
 Aimed for the leaping body of the dog, and when it
 stood, fired. It snapped, rolled over, lay quiet.
 "O mother, you've hit Bruno!" "I couldn't see the
 sights in the moonlight," she answered quietly.
 She stood
 And watched, resting the rifle-butt on the ground.
 The stallion wheeled, freed from his torment,
 the man
 Lurched up to his knees, wailing a thin and bitter
 bird's cry, and the roan thunder
 Struck; hooves left nothing alive but teeth tore up
 the remnant.
 "O mother, shoot, shoot!" Yet California
 Stood carefully watching, till the beast having fed
 all his fury stretched neck to utmost, head high,
 And wrinkled back the upper lip from the teeth,
 yawning obscene disgust over - not a man --
 A smear on the moon-lake earth; then California
 moved by some obscure human fidelity
 Lifted the rifle. Each separate nerve-cell of her
 brain flaming the stars fell from their places
 Crying in her mind: she fired three times before
 the haunches crumpled sidewise, the forelegs
 stiffening,
 And the beautiful strength settled to earth: she
 turned then on her little daughter the mask of
 woman
 Who has killed God. The night-wind veering, the
 smell of the spilt wine drifted down hill from the
 house.