

A GRADUALLY DWINDLING PLAY

(Asking for Air in a Resturant. Being Offered, but not Getting, Oxygen Instead. A Fatal Ending, to take the Reader's Panting Breath Away, in Stolen, Inaudible Bursts. Read, at Risk.)

(Scene: resturant table. Characters: Seated customer and standing waiter.)

A cup of air, please.

Sorry, sire. We only have oxygen left.

What happened. A planetary explosion?

Oh, nothing so drastic, sire. Merely a shortage of supply and an exhorbitant demand that served to be a further drain on an exhausted supply. Only a temporary crisis, sire. Sure to be rectified in time, sire.

How has your resturant dealt with it? Were your customers indignant to be caught on the short end of requesting and not being provided with? Have there been panics in this place?

Nothing serious, sire. There was a rush on the pure air. People were panting to get at it. Their very panting helped to decrease what they were eagerly panting about. Now air is so scarce, that we can only provide oxygen substitutes.

Is that like oleomargarine substituting for pure butter?

Quite like, sire. Apt analogy.

My lungs are bursting with a smothering suffocation of scarcity. Quick, pour me some oxygen, before I have a bout of asphyxiation.

Right away, sire.

Make that a double-helping, please.

Cost you more, of course.

We'll settle that later.

Our reckonings won't choke you, sire. Breathe easy, now. Oxygen served up, shortly.

Promptly, I request.

Why, sire -- you look pale!

Oxygen! I beg you!

Emergencies are unwelcome in this resturant, sire. Please leave.

I'm too faint to.

Sire! You're pale!

I weaken.

Sire! Don't create a scene!

(Customer faints, falls from chair, collapses onto floor. Sensation ensues. Other customers leave their tables and come crowding around. Waiter pleads with them:) Give him air, please. Give him air!

(Obediently, the other customers back up. The fainted customer is dead. Other customers also collapse and die. Waiter also collapses and dies. So do other waiters, chef, resturant owner.)

(Suddely Horatio appears. Horatio:) Fortinbras, what a crowded stage we have here! Go bid the soldiers shoot.

(Offstage dull ritual chorus of guns goes off. A merciful curtain falls, painted pulmonary blue.)

-- Marvin Cohen

New York NY

THE PIGEON

An OLD MAN is sitting in the park, feeding the pigeons. One of the pigeons comes near enough to eat out of his hand. The OLD MAN pickes it up and strangles it.

OLD MAN: This is for what life has done to me.

Suddenly an enormous PIGEON comes down out of the sky. Ponderously, it flies toward the OLD MAN.