

A STORY

Year after year they warmed the friendly sheets,
Disposed of passion briefly, lay all night,
Limbs parted, uninvolved, feeling the slight
Vibrations as the other dreamed or stirred:
Meeting and turning from the trembling flesh,
All night, all marriage.

Till she seized his arm
And tore his shoulder, suddenly, and cried,
(Leaving long weals above his frightened heart)
'Come down upon us, fumbling through our rite,
Appall us with our savagery one night,'
Then threw her naked body from his touch,
Muttering something that he could not catch.
'Eros!' she called, or was it just a moan,
'Come down,' she begged, 'if for this night alone,
And let our long-won gentleness be wrecked
Upon one accurate and frantic act.'

'Eros, come down,' she called, until her pain
Drove her to him to try love's hateful feats,
In labour with desire, with joy, with shame:
She felt it grow until it tore her frame,
Threshing among the sheets.

Lawrence Lerner