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## ADEN

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## **Abstract**

His room. His room is a burning aquarium. The moon has set. The click of prayer beads Soothes someone's panic downstairs. Any minute now the sun's evil eye Will peer through the packing-crate shutters To settle on a scale hung from the ceiling.

# J.D. McClatchy

ADEN

## *Rimbaud dying*

His room. His room is a burning aquarium.  
The moon has set. The click of prayer beads  
Soothes someone's panic downstairs.  
Any minute now the sun's evil eye  
Will peer through the packing-crate shutters  
To settle on a scale hung from the ceiling.

The indifferent day stretches out on rawhide  
And chews its qat. The bandage is sweating,  
His leg is sweating, his knee now swollen  
To the size of a skull. Angels in his veins  
Weep for their empty sabbath and loot his sorrows.  
Stalls in the Market of Silence open next door.

The world is happening again without him.  
Grit's blown up onto the trussed sharks.  
Two subalterns in topees are arguing.  
Dhows at the wharf, gharries at the curb,  
Mongrels and hawkers and slops in the shade.  
The black boy beside him whispers "*Mektoub.*"

Where is forgiveness? A hand is stroking  
His head, the fingers like albino carp  
Gliding aimlessly through his hair,  
Brushing sometimes against the fever-weed.  
Where is forgiveness? Sleep with your eyes open,  
Sleep on the stone you have made of your heart.

Here at the end – Death clumsy as an old priest –  
Some words, some oil, a thin broth of memory ...  
Lying at night in a waving wheatfield, face to face  
With the sky's black icon. The stars are moving too.  
They rustle like a silk in whose pleats are kept  
The changes: flesh to flame, ash to air.