

(A FORTRESS #6)

One afternoon as I sat and gazed at it, I dozed off as always and dreamed that the same mother and daughter, the ones I listened to each night in the room next door, were leading me across the lawn towards the children's house of planks, or rather, the mother led her daughter by the arm and the daughter led me. I did not want to follow but was unable to stop them or call out. They went through a large door, hopelessly crooked though the hinges remained silent. They entered an immediate and impenetrable darkness. Pausing for a moment, I could make out a hum of sound, a murmuring coming from somewhere deeper within the heart of the structure. The atmosphere inside was pleasant, a little too warm, earthy but with a familiar smell of creosote. They moved further on into the dark and after following a gradual incline down for a surprising distance, chinks of light began to show in the great jumbled dome of planks and slats of wood that covered a hall, at the centre of which, what looked to be a huge vat or half sunken drum, like the lip of some great wooden barrel. The mother led us to the rim and we looked over its edge, down into a vast, endless dark, a huge chasm leading or ending who knew where, and for a moment I thought I could make out hundreds of twinklings in hundreds of tiny eyes and at that moment I had the awareness that the great tiredness that had come me and still carried, was lifting, had lifted forever.