

*Philip Jason*

## **Artist, with Laughter, Sees the Painted World**

Ricardo's assistant straps him into place. He tries to escape, but only to make sure he can't. The struggle makes his skin uncomfortable.

The lights in the room, a basement without windows, are strong. Ricardo is held by the straps in a vertical position, supported by a standing flat structure that is bolted to the ground. In front of him, suspended from the ceiling, are the following canvasses painted over the past year:

### *The Silent Burden*

Inside a white, featureless room, a man is in motion, carrying a large, beautiful piano on his back; his feet, bleeding from the effort, trace his infinite path across the room and back again, marking the floor with a lemniscate while his desperate shadow chases him, wanting nothing more than to play the piano.

### *The Destiny of Love*

In the center of a room, a man and a woman embrace, their faces tilted, lipless. They are surrounded by portraits of boring, conflicted nudity. From the holes in their chest, trails of blood and light flow in two different directions across the floor towards some exterior setting, indicating to where their hearts have fled. It is clear that the pair would be kissing with the missing lips, which have taken flight from the faces and are now circling the room without eyes, searching blindly for the missing hearts, mostly bouncing into walls.

### *The Tea-Time Child Made to Feel Fake in a World She Imagines as Real*

In the bedroom-forest of a child, a traditional pink and white tea set consisting of casual cups and elegant saucers, sits on a table. Sitting at the table, the foundation of this tea time fantasy, a still and lifeless stuffed doll version of a little girl wearing a crown made from her parents' hopes and dreams. She is surrounded by an amazing variety of lively figments born from her imagination, mostly animals, all of them collectively engaged in an attempt to revive the reality of the girl with the taste of tea.

Ricardo's head is fastened in place to prevent him from looking away from the paintings. His eyelids are taped to his eyebrows.

The assistant stands before him and looks him in his eyes.

"Are you the artist?" the assistant says.

"I am," Ricardo replies.

"And are these your paintings?"

"They are."

The assistant nods.

"We are ready to begin."

Several maniacal others emerge from someplace outside the artist's periphery. They come with knives and fire and gasoline and fall upon the artwork savagely. They shred the fibers of the canvasses,

severing color from color, eviscerating the paintings with a practiced violence. When they finish with their knives, they use the gasoline and spread the fire equally amongst the sad remains of the paintings. As Ricardo watches this, the fire burns his eyes, but he still can't close them and the heat causes the tears to evaporate before they are able to do any good.