

1958

The Accused

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Recommended Citation

Moore, Ellen (1958) "The Accused," *Exile*: Vol. 4 : No. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol4/iss2/5>

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THE ACCUSED

BY ELLEN MOORE

Out of a scarlet storm
Into the mouth of a multitude,
One man stumbles
 Leading a lash,
 Bound by a bell—
The brands of a crucified question:
Beware the unclean!—
While taut throats chant a preassumed conviction,
Murderer,
 Adulterer,
 Dreamer,
And a judge with dripping hands
Delivers a Barabas.
But who shall cast the stones,
Drive the nails
When crowds dissolve
Into twisted vines on temple walls,
Into vultures lost in hostile cityways—
 No branch straight for a cross,
 No talons strong to rend the flesh
Of even one man?
And who shall answer
One man
Stumbling out of a scarlet storm,
Crying,
 “Brother,
 Friend,
 Accomplice,
Where now your miracles,
 Your Christ?”
Fog and the whisper of barren vines,
 The shadow of shattered wings?
Who shall answer:
 “Once there was a Judas,
 a Pilate,
 a Crowd”?