

The Louse-Hunters, Aldous Huxley

The Louse-Hunters  
(From the French of Rimbaud).

When the child's forehead, full of torments red,  
Cries out for sleep and its pale host of dreams,  
His two big sisters come unto his bed,  
Having long fingers, tipped with silvery gleams.

They set him at a casement, open wide  
On seas of flowers that stir in the blue airs,  
And through his curls, all wet with dew, they slide  
Those terrible searching finger-tips of theirs.

He hears them breathing, softly, fearfully,  
Honey-sweet ruminations, slow respired:  
Then a sharp hiss breaks time and melody—  
Spittle indrawn, old kisses new-desired.

Down through the perfumed silences he hears  
Their eyelids fluttering: long fingers thrill,  
Probing a lassitude bedimmed with tears,  
While the nails crunch at every louse they kill.

He is drunk with Languor—soft accordion-sigh,  
Delirious wine of Love in Idleness;  
Longings for tears come welling up and die,  
As slow or swift he feels their magical caress.

The end