

# Child's Play

*by* gerard varni

Alive but twelve years,  
He's taken a dozen  
Lives himself, stalking  
The hot, bloody  
Shit-strewn streets of  
Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa.

He slips in while dreams rage,  
Machete drawn,  
Moonlight weeping  
From its ragged edge.  
Quiet, so quiet a night;  
Asleep on the floor  
A man a woman a child?  
No difference;  
Like an animal, he sniffs  
And quivers,  
Body electric now,  
Death lust surging throughout  
Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa;

He crawls on calloused knees  
To the torpid form,  
Grasps a fistful of hair,  
Snaps the head up  
With no sound  
But the rumor of a gasp,  
Swings the familiar tool  
A practiced blow  
That ruptures, lacerates.

He wrenches the head half off,  
A woman he thinks.  
The warm, tolerable blood,  
Its dull ferrous scent,  
Brings a broad boyish grin;  
Rhythmically he swings  
Again, and once more;  
And then its off,  
Swaying and slaving  
In his calm hand in  
Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa.

He leaves then,  
Bare feet rasping  
Over the dusty floor,  
Drops the grisly lump  
Into a rocking chair  
On the front porch.  
When daylight breaks,  
The bulging eyes, the  
Ashen grimace, will  
Inspire fear and esteem,  
And if not esteem then  
Fear will do for this child  
Of the revolution,  
This brave executioner,  
This stealthy night slayer in  
Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa.

Walking east, he pauses,  
Picks a cassava,  
Cleaves the melon in two;  
He tears juicy chunks  
Of flesh to cleanse the blade.  
Then he turns,

Misery in his wake,  
Dreaming of nothing  
But inexorable death,  
With no tears  
For his castrated youth.  
He slouches toward  
the low mountains  
Which rise to plateaus  
Which fall away into dark  
Unknowable forests in  
Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa.

