

J&K. A MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY

A VERSE PLAY

By Neal Brown

ACT I. SCENE I.

A mountainous country. A very large and steep wooden ramp, fitted with ropes and steps to be climbed upon.

Enter J&K and MOUNTAINEERS (OLD SCHOOL, HIGH-TECH, FREAKS, EXPLORERS, PILGRIMS, NATURE LOVERS, EXTREME SPORT, PRECIPITATED SUICIDES, and MYSTICAL SEARCHERS).

JANNE

*Now for our mountain sport: up to yond hill;
The fore-end of my time. But up to the mountains! When from the mountain-top Pisanio show'd thee, That fly me thus? Some villain mountaineers?*

KRISTINE

*Yield, rustic mountaineer.
Who call'd me traitor, mountaineer, and swore That by the top doth take the mountain pine, That here by mountaineers lies slain. Alas! We'll higher to the mountains; there secure us. To seek her on the mountains*

JANNE

*Ha, thou mountain-foreigner!
ensconce your rags, your cat-a-mountain looks, a mountain of mummy.*

KRISTINE

*but mountains may be removed with earthquakes
the mountain of mad flesh that claims marriage of me, at the charge-house on the top of the mountain?*

At your sweet pleasure, for the mountain.¹

ACT II. SCENE I.

An alchemical kitchen. There is a view through a window to a herbal garden.

[Flourish]. Enter JANNE (a SHAMAN) at one entrance and KRISTINE (an APOTHECARY) at another, accompanied by CITIZENS: HIPPIES, ESOTERICS, NEW AGERS, CONTEMPORARY

URBAN YOGIS, AN ARTIST, AN ALCHEMIST, A MAGICIAN, A WITCH, AN ILLUSIONIST, A BUM, A VAGABOND, A MARTYR, A HYPNOTIST, A WRITER (NEAL BROWN), and A FILMMAKER (FRITZ STOLBERG).

JANNE

*O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
This hateful imperfection of her eyes
your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow
. . . obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect. ²*

KRISTINE

*no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows. Being once perfected how to grant suits,
would with such perfection govern, sir
So perfect and so peerless, are created ³*

JANNE

*With all my imperfections on my head:
For her perfections: but my revenge will come.
And with such cozenage – is't not perfect conscience ⁴*

KRISTINE

*My parts, my title and my perfect soul
It is a judgment maim'd and most imperfect That will confess perfection so could err
She is indeed perfection.
one unperfectness shows me another,
From one that so imperfectly conceits,
Of one entire and Perfect chrysolite ⁵*

JANNE

*Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:
I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more Which in his death were perfect
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,
Though in your state of honour I am perfect. ⁶*

KRISTINE

*not alone the imperfections of long-engrafted condition maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age,
Something he left imperfect in the state,
Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect
I fear I am not in my perfect mind. ⁷*

JANNE (strewing flowers)

So holy and so perfect is my love ⁸

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Holy Mountain Analogue. A high place. (The top/the overview . . . up becomes down . . . one can see in all directions . . . a prism, multiplied perspectives).

JANNE

One finds here, very rarely in the low lying areas, more frequently as one goes farther up, a clear and extremely hard stone that is spherical and varies in size—a kind of crystal.

KRISTINE

The clarity of this stone is so great and its index of refraction so close to that of air that, despite the crystal's great density, the unaccustomed eye hardly perceives it.

JANNE

If, after climbing up and down three times through gullies that end in sheer drops (visible only at the last moment), your legs begin to tremble from knee to heel and your teeth start to chatter, first reach a little platform where you can stop safely; then, remember all the curse words you know and hurl them at the mountain, and spit on the mountain; finally, insult it in every way possible . . .

KRISTINE

. . . swallow some water, have a bite to eat, and start climbing again, calmly, slowly, as if you had your whole lifetime to undo this bad move. In the evening, before going to sleep, when it all comes back to you, you will see then that it was just a performance. It wasn't the mountain you were talking to, it wasn't the mountain you conquered. The mountain is only rock or ice, with no ears or heart.

JANNE

But this performance . . .

KRISTINE (*aside*)

. . . may have saved your life.⁹

An orchard of J&K's house. Enter J&K and CITIZENS.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

JANNE AND KRISTINE

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, (I'm ready to go anywhere)

Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, (I'm ready for to fade)

Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, (Onto my own parade)

With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine: (Cast your dancing spell my way)

There sleep us sometime of the night,

(I promise to go under it)¹⁰

Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight¹¹

EXEUNT

NOTES

- 1. William Shakespeare, Cymbeline*
- 2. William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- 3. William Shakespeare, The Tempest*
- 4. William Shakespeare, Hamlet*
- 5. William Shakespeare, Othello*
- 6. William Shakespeare, Macbeth*
- 7. William Shakespeare, King Lear*
- 8. William Shakespeare, As You Like It*
- 9. René Daumal, Mount Analogue: A Tale of Non-Euclidian and Symbolically Authentic Mountaineering Adventures (1952)*
- 10. Bob Dylan, Mr Tambourine Man (1965)*
- 11. William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream*