

THE WOLF

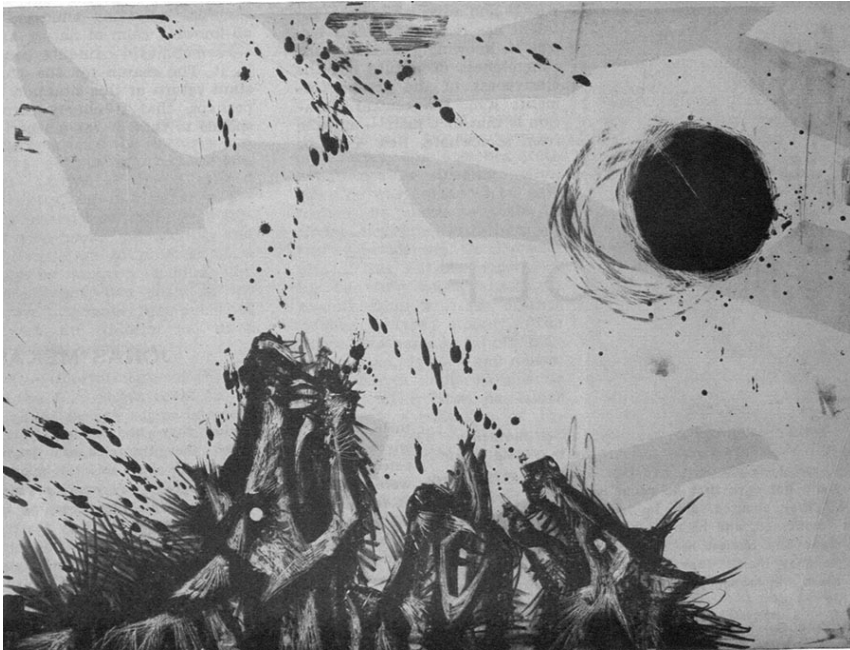
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They caught him, they closed in on him, they made a circle around him, and then they told him to dance. They laughed, and this was their revenge. They did not care that he could not dance. "Dance, wolf!" they shouted, and he looked around and he was frightened, and he only looked at them. He did not have any choice, he was their prisoner and he had to obey them. They continued shouting, and he sat there and looked at them stubbornly, with hatred in his eyes.

"Who can force me to dance?" he thought. But then their fists began falling on his back, and they beat him with sticks; with sticks they beat the wolf. And though he knew he didn't want it, he felt, in his helplessness, his legs beginning to move and leap and move in the circle, round and round. It was his hopelessness, and it was the beginning of the dance, though he didn't want to do it and hated them. "No, it's not me, no, it's not me, it's only my legs that are leaping," he said. But who will hear, who will understand a wolf! And all that he wanted now was to stare at them, with hate, but he felt that his legs did not obey him, and he jumped and ran round in the circle. "I will not, I will not," he groaned. But his legs already leaped, his legs did not obey any more. The fists and the sticks were like a heavy rain, and he leaped, his legs leaped. He ran in the round, and he jumped, and then he saw, he suddenly saw that he was already dancing. "The wolf is dancing!" they roared, and they all wanted to see how the wolf danced. This was their revenge, the wolf knew it, and all that he wanted was to stay there and stare at them with hate, but he was dancing, his legs danced, and he was not able any longer to stop them, he had to obey them, and he jumped and leaped. He was their prisoner, he did not have any other choice, he, the wolf! They caught him, one day, a free beast of the forests, they caught the wolf, and now he belonged to them. He could hear their voices around him, they had brought their wives and their children, they trampled and trumpeted and shouted around him, and colorful balloons were floating over the square. They made a feast of the wolf's dance, they celebrated the catching of the wolf, the imprisonment of the wolf; they feasted their revenge, they sang and they shouted, and he leaped and leaped, and the sticks hit him and fists, once more and once more, — and when he already thought that they had forgotten him, he felt another one and another, and he leaped to the side, and there they waited all ready for him, and to the left and to the right, and left and right, he leaped. He did not want it, all that he wanted was to lay down and let himself be beaten. He was a courageous wolf, but his legs were weak, he knew. He knew that his legs were weak and that he had to obey them. He knew that his liberty was endless and unlimited, but that his legs were weak, he knew that his legs were limited. Why force a wolf to dance, why, as if he were a dancer.. Look at his legs!— And he leaped and leaped, and he did not see, he only leaped miserably, silently, moaning. Who would understand if he would say that it is hard for a wolf, that it can be hard for a wolf. He is a wolf, a killer, a beast from the forests. So they laughed in their contentment. He could hear, through the dizziness, their laughing and the rhythm of the music, and they trampled and roared, and a cloud of dust was eating his throat; he leaped and leaped, and he felt now how his legs were bending and tired. "Oh, jump, wolf, jump!" — they shouted, and he did not feel any more, he only jumped round and round, kneeling and falling; it was a poor and miserable dance, and all he could hear was their shouting as they roared around him — they howled around him, he could clearly hear them howling now. In the beginning they sounded only like a large waterfall, but now they were like an innumerable rut of wolves; they howled and roared around him, and from his dark circle he could see: the sharp light in their eyes. "Leap, wolf, leap, dance the dance of thy liberty!"— and he jumped and fell and leaped again and again. You are a poor dancer, wolf, you are a bad dancer. You did not learn to dance in the woods, no, you didn't learn to dance in the woods, nor in the snow, and thy legs are not beautiful, you who were born in the forests!—leap wolf, leap! And he jumped and leaped, and the howling around him grew louder and louder, they roared like a huge rut, and he knew he had no other choice now. Who are they, who are they, what is a wolf, where is the essence of a wolf, what is a wolf and what is not. — They howled and they jumped and they leaped. They will kill you, they will kill you, if you don't jump, they will kill you. But he no longer cared, he could not feel any more, he could not feel nor think any more, he only groaned and fell and leaped again, and the howling around him grew and grew, and the dust, and heat, and their eyes burned in the dark. They were a rut, they were wolves, and who was he, who was he he did not know any more, now he was something that he did not

know any more. But he felt that he would never find out, that this was his last question, a question which he knew was his last question: Who am I, who are they, who are I and who am they?— And they roared and the sticks and fists fell on his back, but he did not have any strength to obey, he did not have any strength to obey, he did not have any strength. Ha, ha, he laughed, and they roared and howled, but he did not hear them any more. He lay there, a free wolf, and the dance was ended, and he was free, he didn't have any strength left, his legs did not have any strength to obey: he was free not to leap.

They were still dancing around him, shouting and howling — "Jump, wolf, jump!" — but the wolf lay there in the circle, and they will never know that the wolf was always free, that only his legs were leaping and jumping and dancing, that these were only his legs that were jumping, not the wolf, the free beast of the forests, that the legs were not the wolf — the wolf was much deeper, the wolf was very deep, though he didn't know what a wolf is and who are they, who are they and what is a wolf. —



Romas Viesulas - Illustration for "The Wolf"