THE DWARF

Editor's Note: The author of this poem has stated that when she wrote it law was "the last thing I had in mind". Nevertheless, she has graciously consented to our reprinting the poem, together with the comment that our readers may find its imagery appropriate to the perennially controversial problem of defining the role of law in "a changing world".

The dwarf keeps the maiden
In a glass coffin
On his dining room table
Sealed shut with her half apple
To make her stay dead.

Here she is secure
A stiff wax blossom under
A cut-glass bell
In this house where all is still
As mahogany and stuffed leather
Except the dwarf, who moves his chair
Nearer, to sit and stare

For he rightly fears
If he looks away, she will stand up
(The coffin shattered like a chandelier)
And walk out through his panelled halls
(A dwindling bluebeard stowed inside
Every fastened cupboard)

Then he will have to follow her
Into the menace of a changing world
Until she disappears up branching stairs
He never will be tall enough to climb.

MARGARET ATWOOD*

*Miss Atwood is a Toronto poet. This poem originally appeared in the spring, 1963, issue of The Tamarack Review, and has subsequently been reprinted in Poetry 64, an anthology of contemporary Canadian poetry, edited by Jacques Godbout and John Robert Colombo. (Les Editions du Jour and The Ryerson Press, 1963).