

JOCELYN BROOKE

SEASIDE, 1942

Barbed wire on the beaches
And soldiers watching the skyline
From the ruined esplanade—
And inland, the abandoned huts,
And the desolate reaches where
In peacetime summers
The fruit-stalls and the cafés made
A gay ephemeral village, and where now
Only the tough maritime weeds
—Horned poppy and samphire and the tree-mallow—
Impose their austere and curious
Patterns upon the scene, and bind
The shifting sand and pebbles to resist
The encroaching tide.
And the soldier watching the sea
Turns landward to rest his distance-dazzled
Eyes, and remarks the derelict huts, the deserted
Street of grey houses beyond the shingle,
And thinks: *I am fighting for this country.*
And something seems to have gone wrong—
The facts refuse to fit
His neat and derivative preconceptions,
And turning back to the sea
—Hungry and tired, and bored
With the effort of thought—he gives it up.
And the wind blows up from the marshes
Cold with unshed rain
And sings in the ragged tamarisks, and shakes
The shattered windows of the empty café—
And the soldier wishes himself back again
In his warm unreal dream of Civvy Street
(*Roll on Christmas and let's have some nuts*):
Being scarcely aware that Civvy Street
Is the grey abandoned houses
Behind the esplanade, the empty teashop,
The bombed chapel and the shops boarded up;

Unable to recognize the insidious
Future slowly impinging upon the present
Like the tough and salty weeds that overrun
And gradually possess
The foreshore and the subsiding débris of
The summer camp: for the indolent mind—
Half-doped with Orders and the Forces Programme—
Cannot connect, is able to see only
The small world lit by the flickering match,
The discrete and unrelated fragments of
An unperceived continuum... And the shoulders twitch,
The foot taps out a rhythm, the loose lips
Frame a few syncopated bars, and the eyes
Fix their blank stare
Once more on the grey distance, where
The clouds sag, heavy with menace, over
The darkened lands of Europe and
The soldier's future.

BERNARD GUTTERIDGE

JOHANNESBURG

Gold smothers Johannesburg. Everthing—
Whisky and sun and dust and clouds—is gold.
The gold slag heaps are backscene mountains
Encircling now this racecourse and its crowd.
Jacaranda trees blaze bright blue lanterns, colour

Caresses colour, violet with orange sleeves, striped cap;
Greys, chestnuts, pink tickets in lapels;
Buttercup golden jacket holds a minute jockey.
Slender girls enchant their rainbow dresses.
Then the white tapes fly and the line flames

And twenty horses batter down the straight,
Oh gold wins always by a length
Among the green trees pulling to a canter,
Walk back among the gardens of the paddock;
On the gay silks the gold sun's friendly banter.