

Charles on fire

Experience, Human Nature



Appearances, or spirituality? Charles on fire, by James Merrill, describes a conversation about the trade off between the maintaining of appearances and the pursuing of spirituality, which the discussion happened among three friends. The process of spirituality finding is beautiful but painful, and people would rather stay with appearances. One of them, the bearded man, says, "Without your Intellectual and spiritual values, man, you are sunk." The beard implies that this man is old enough to summarize something of life.

And his friends realize that he is right, they do only pay attention to the surface, the appearances. So they begin to contemplate. Then Charles appears, "brought out little tumblers finely etched" filled with wine, then lights a fire in one glass. The narrator describes the beautiful view of the fire on wine, "A blue flame, gentle, beautiful, came, went above the surface," but rapidly "we heard the vessel crack" and "the contents drained". That means if you want to chase the rise of your spirit, you usually need to pay pain as the cost.

And this pain is so unbearable that few people can tolerate it. That is why Charles "made two quick sweeps" to extinguish the flames and "flesh again." The word "flesh" implies that Charles comes back to a real person with flesh, not a virtual split. And even so, Charles still makes "a shocked, unconscious glance into the mirror" because he cares about his appearance. Since he "finding nothing changed," he "sank down among us," just as the bearded man said, you are sunk. "Maybe in a few minutes, they are in "a crystal coach" which means they are in a higher level of life.

However, finally they have to get out of the coach, and return to a normal person, a lower level of life. James Merrill uses many metaphors to make his readers contemplate. These metaphors are beautiful, ingenious and most important, reasonable. It is wonderful that he can express his opinion through such a short, delicate poem. Discussion happened among three friends. The process of spirituality finding is them, the bearded man, says, "Without your intellectual and spiritual values, man, few people can tolerate it.

That is why Charles "made two quick sweeps" to extinguish the flames and "flesh again." The word "flesh" implies that Charles comes back to a real person with flesh, not a virtual spirit. And even so, Charles still makes "a shocked, unconscious glance into the mirror" because he cares about his appearance. Since he "finding nothing changed," he "sank down among us," Just as the bearded man said, "you are sunk." Maybe in a few minutes, they are in "a crystal coach" which coach, and return to a normal person, a lower level of life. James Merrill uses