

Van Der Graaf Generator, The Emperor In His War-Room

i. THE EMPEROR

Standing in the space that holds the silent lace of night
away from you

You think that you can hold the searing, molten gold between
your fingers ...

But it slips through, tearing tendons as it goes,
exposing the white of a knuckle ...

flesh-and-metal forming letters in the mould.

Cradling your gun, after choosing the ones you think should die-

Lying on the hill ... crawling over the windowsill into your
living-room

They stare out, glass-eyed aimless heads,
bodies torn by vultures ..

you are the man whose hands are rank with the smell of death.

Saviour of the Fallen, Protector of the Weak,

Friend of the Tall Ones, Keeper of the Peace ...

Ah, but it is the only way you know

Looking out to sea, a flattened plane of weeds which bear no living

You crush life in your fist as your heart is kissed by the lips
of death

Ghosts betray you, ghosts betray you, in the night they steal your eye
from its socket ...

and the ball hangs fallen on your cheek.

Complaining tongues are stilled; a thousand mouths are filled
with rusting metal.

Your face a shade of green; somehow you try to speak through all the
garbage in your mouth

But it won't come out, and you cannot frame the words
as your stepson

throws your fame into the flames and you are burned.

Saviour of the Fallen, Protector of the Weak,

Friend of the Tall Ones, Keeper of the Peace.

Ah, but it is the only way you know

ii. THE ROOM

Live by sword and you shall die so,

All your power shall come to nought,

every life you take is part of your own,

death, not power, is what you've bought.

Cringing in your room as the outriders of doom step
on your threshold;

Begging for your life as the impartial knife sinks in your
screaming flesh ...

without malice, merely taking murder's toll,

you must pay the price of hate, and that price is
your soul

Live in peace or die forever in your war-room.