

**SGH, after the SARS outbreak of 4 April 2003**

## **SGH, BLOCK 7**

*By The Hobbit*

They lie in wait for you and me  
To bring the sword to us and through us:  
Indeed, to raise the One accursed.  
For irony knows no greater pathos,  
Than a beneficent healer pollinating,  
With Death each selfless breath.  
But they will not fell too many,  
Lest there be too few to live on<sup>1</sup>.

We set up many signs, gantries, barriers  
And try to salve fear with thermometers.  
But really, that is too little to stop,  
An adversary sly and numerous,  
That if just one should coax a ear cooler  
Or somehow feign a tranquil chest  
It will again scythe through many of us  
To quick fiery ends in double black bags<sup>2</sup>.

When night finally falls  
The Quad<sup>3</sup> lies numbed in its own emptiness.  
On the hill, the ivory COMB<sup>4</sup> shimmers,  
A ghost of its once preening self  
Now gazing painfully at her children,  
Shell-shocked, stricken, in medical trenches,  
Viral artillery ricocheting from death unto death  
And gives no respite even in shadows.

### **Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> *An agent cannot kill every host if it wants to spread – the principle of attenuation in an outbreak.*
- <sup>2</sup> *SARS fatalities are double-bagged and cremated as soon as possible.*
- <sup>3</sup> *A manicured fountain garden between SGH Blocks 5 and 7, facing COMB.*
- <sup>4</sup> *COMB – College of Medicine Building, MOH.*