EIGHTY STORIES above the eacophonous terra firma of the \_xenophobiceity, the intractable equilibrist. without valediction,steppedout for a feat of postprandial funambulism on the wire that stretched between the buildings. He gazed at the unsightly chips in the bas-relief frieze of the opposite monolithic tower, a superannuated skyscraper of stone and "translucent plastic; some malefic miscreant had fired egregiously at the building with a hand weapon, damaging the sculpture, but the sacrosanct (Punctilios of the city s'patronizing and supercilious elite had prevented more than a token punishment of the egocentric youth. The equilibrist, in a stoical but discursive soliloquy, had abjured analgesics, and now his head began to pulse fortissimo with the magnitude of the challenge that had become his id e fixe, a nonpareil: to cross the wire to the farthest building. It would be his magnumopus. He would be lionized as the metempsychosis of Houdini. Hagiographies would be written in his honor, for this distance was nojinterstice, and the buildings were by no means contiguous. In supercilious sangfroid, he stood over the man-made abyss. Far below, the mellifluous, sotto voce hum of the traffic exiting the city in confluent streams of red tail lights signaled that the city had not yet settled into sedate night. Far above, the omniscient physiognomyy of the constellations twinkled its (imiponderable benediction on = a equilibrist as he stepped, with thelimeredulous joy of a NeOphyte on the wire. ve