

Naive Sister Janet is the nominal coordinator, but TV evangelist and religious publisher Klaus Kreig is clearly engineering the proceedings. All of the authors have published mysteries with protagonists fashioned after their own religious states, and all have been approached to sign on with Kreig's sleazy P. G. (Praise God) Press. Determined to add some authenticity to what is actually a scam, Kreig has unearthed a deeply embarrassing event in the life of each author and threatened to reveal it. Faced with the end of both their religious and publishing careers, all become suspects when murder occurs. Father Koesler uses his powers of observation and deduction to reveal the killer.

The characters are well delineated within a cleverly conceived plot, but Kienzle considerably slows the story line to pontificate on post Vatican II "failures." He laments the lack of vocations, mandatory retirement of clerics, encroaching ecumenism, the easing of restrictions, etc. Lay society is lambasted for its dull mentality and enjoyment of "kinky" sex.

Thomas Merton is portrayed respectfully as a Trappist who entered under the strict De Rance interpretation of the rule and then dies under an easier regime. The monk character wishes to imitate Merton by writing a series of popular mysteries in monastic settings and then be able to produce "scholarly, profound, contemplative Mertonese writings."

Masquerade provides pleasant summer reading if you don't mind a sermon with your mystery!

CROSS COUNTRY

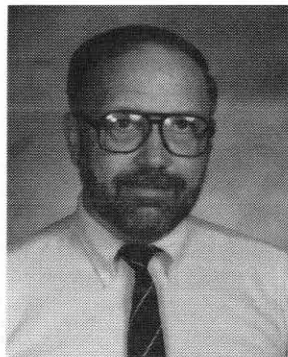
by **R. B. Lasco**

Skiing up the creek trail,
Watching snow motes in sunshine among hemlocks,
Then, at the top, from the spruce plantation
Skied Thomas Merton —
A cowed monk from a pine needle tunnel.

He snowplowed to a stop.
"Father Louis, what is the Tao?"
"Well, the Tao is a ski track
Before
The ski goes through the snow."

He glided away,
Skiing in good wax, but odd form.
My skis go "swish, swish."
His skis slice the snow in Trappist silence.

He began the long, downhill run.
"Father Louis!
Man does not make saints!
God makes saints —
Humans must discover them."



R. B. LASCO

□ **R. B. Lasco** lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and works as a media specialist at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland. He attended a small teachers college in Michigan, taught English in college for three years and in high school for fifteen years, served in the army military in Germany (1966-1968), and recently graduated from Western Maryland College with a degree in library science. He is a founding member of the Mencken Society of Baltimore and loves cross country skiing.