

AFTERGLOW

Limpid lavender like water-hyacinths  
The light floods on after the sun is down  
And tips ethereally the primrose moon.  
There is a delicate music in the films of the air,  
And I remember how I saw, long, long ago,  
A primrose slip of a girl, with lowered lids  
And fugitive smile such as Luini loved,  
Flush ethereally with the flooding of first love.

THE UNLOVED TO HIS BELOVED

Could I pluck down Aldebaran  
And haze the Pleiads in your hair  
I could not add more burning to your beauty  
Or lend a starrier coldness to your air.

If I were cleaving terrible waters  
With death ahead on the visible sands  
I could not turn and stretch my hands more wildly,  
More vainly turn and stretch to you my hands.

A MAD MAID'S SONG

Here's tansy for you, and a sprig of rue.  
Such simples are not worn upon the brow,  
But next a heart they'll keep it true —  
Or did till now.  
A sprig of rue should keep it true  
And tansy's good as any vow.  
But round your heart, not round your brow  
Wear them, and wear enough for two.

EXCHANGE

It does not seem a piteous thing to pass  
From out the passionate sunlight and to never see  
Light-loving winds press down the tremulous grass  
Inconstantly.

The closing of the eyes, the clean forgetting,  
The silence broken by no whispering love-calls,  
These willingly I'd take — not once regretting  
Unheard footfalls.

What power lies in long, untender kisses  
To steal the tears from pain, the innocence from mirth!  
What loved exchange — these desolate, hurt blisses  
For folded earth!

A DEBUSSY SERENADE

Love, they say, is kind:  
Nay, wrinkles here  
And here love gave to me  
And quenched my eyes.  
Love is not kind.

A god, they say, is love.  
Do gods, then, dull  
The aureate dawn and bleach  
The purple haze?  
No god is love.

A boy, they say, is love.  
His hunter's eyes,  
Alert and cold, I saw,  
Insatiable,  
And they were old.

Give back, O love, give back  
What you have stole,  
And I will make return  
Of all your gifts —  
And go, enriched.

## WINDS OF WINTER

Shake out, dark-tressed and multitudinous storm-winds,  
Your theft of scarlet leaves for Hecate's hair,  
Your coral bits from autumn's dead clenched hand,  
Your brittle blooms that once had breath and color,  
Asters and docks and hateful immortelles —  
Scatter them down, but bear away the summer  
And hopes that were and loves that could not be.  
Strip off the garlands, hang the trees with fire  
Of frost and clanking armor of blue ice.  
There is much death abroad and for a tomb  
Starkness were needed and unmelted tears.  
Welcome, dark-tressed and multitudinous storm-winds.

HYMN TO THE SUN

Strike down into my breast, O sun, and cleanse my soul —  
Shadows are here and ailments of the dark!  
Burn out the horror, sear away the dread,  
Beat like live hope in spark on molten spark.

Lone in your uncouth solitude of chasmed air  
You scale the sky, reckless of end or change,  
Chanting like some wild Himalayan shepherd  
Wind-rocked, enraptured, on his bleak vast range.

Eternity will pass and down the blue cliffs hear  
You singing, vigorous still in fierce delight.  
Strike through my breast and pour your courage in —  
Enough to last this little way to night.

COMPENSATION

Delicious hurt is in the throb  
Of every ruby in youth's blood:  
Moonlight or love can call a sob,  
Or red trees in a drizzling wood.

We own a strength we never guess  
When warm and weak with April's wine,  
A fortitude against the stress  
Of tragic things young hearts divine.

The visions that we could not bear  
Turned facts are borne almost with grace:  
The future with its heartbreak air  
Arrives unflushed and commonplace.

Far-travelled in the land of pain,  
Fate's clear worst warrant learned by rote,  
I watch the red trees in the rain  
With eyes undimmed and unhurt throat.



THAT KINGDOM

Fingerless cactus hands heal in the sun  
And tortured olive trees grope up the hills;  
A lizard feigns to sleep but flinching kills  
The busy spider in her web half done.

The gaunt Sicilian pastures burn blue-white,  
The sunlight rains its blue perpetual rain;  
The south is still the south, but not again  
Shall I find there my kingdom, Heart's Delight.

Oh, not on hills of blue eternal lustre  
Build we the kingdom of our heart's delight,  
But on love's shale, that quakes above a night  
Where ocean yawns and screaming storm-birds cluster.

AUTUMN WISDOM

The nights of autumn stars are never still,  
For without gust the heavy acorns fall  
And rattle on the roof — the oak's proud gift  
And happy show of his accomplishment.

For this he shouldered storms and stripping hail,  
For this unwrinkled in the weak spring sun  
His velvet buds and shook his tassels out  
And ruffled noisily in boisterous May.

For this — a fall of acorns in the starlight.  
But where they fall, what burgeoning or death  
Awaits them on the sparkling, plangent ground  
Are not to his bronze peace inquietudes.

On glittering shale, perhaps, or sterile sand  
Their hope of swelling spring will waste away;  
Perhaps the droves of night-marauding hogs,  
Scuffling and loud, will eat the last smooth one;

Perhaps the little children, up at dawn,  
Scouring the deep-rimed leaves for treasure-trove,  
Will set them with their spools and broken glass  
For patterns in their fairy palaces;

Perhaps not one will burst and branch and grow  
A windy place for elf-eyed boys to climb,

A shade for clasping lovers in the night,  
A spangled roof for old folk in the rain.

He will not care: his joy is to have done  
The appointed deed, not guess the deed's result.  
Along his branches creeps the bright-eyed frost.  
He spills his fruit and laughs against the stars.

ONE PATH

Outside the Earthly Paradise,  
    Beneath its cool high walls,  
I walk the little grass-blurred path  
    Where sunlight seldom falls.

I try no more the guarded gates  
    That will not let me in;  
I cease to wonder what the cause,  
    What accident, what sin.

I walk the lonely path that's mine,  
    My heart and I employ  
Our solitude in songs about  
    The near-by Kingdom's joy.

And once, while singing thus, we heard  
    Applause and friendly cries,  
And saw, high up, our happy kin,  
    Love in their lovely eyes.

The path of lonely wayfaring  
    Ends where I cannot tell:  
Outside the Earthly Paradise  
    I know — but that is well.

TO A STRANGER

When I see your beauty the beasts in me lie down  
And I know the good man that I might have been.  
To watch you is more cleansing than clear sunsets  
And more regretful than the deeds that I have done.  
If memory could only keep me perfect  
And not fade out to leave me with myself!  
With all my altars ashes and my gods asleep  
You with your marvellous sad infinite beauty  
Make me kneel down and know what life could be —  
Unhurtfulness and worship and sure trust.  
But I have missed you in the passing of the ships  
And as a stranger only watch you pass.  
Yet seeing you tonight in your great beauty  
I shall dream calmly of a clear green sky  
Filled with wild white swans flying, flying over,  
Against the hardly-visible, wide-swarmling stars.

WONDER AND A THOUSAND SPRINGS

Along the just-returning green  
That fledges field and berm and brake  
The purple-veined white violets lean,  
Scarcely awake;

And pear and plum and apple trees,  
Evoked to bloom before they leaf,  
Lift cloudy branches filled with bees  
Strange as new grief.

A thousand springs will poise and pass  
And leave no track beneath the sun:  
Some gray-eyed lad, cool-cheeked as grass,  
Will watch each one,

And wonder, as I wonder here,  
And find no clue I have not found,  
And smile before he joins me, near  
But underground.

CALYPSO TO ULYSSES

If there were any room within my heart  
For godly pride to linger, I should not kneel  
And clasp your feet. But there's no tenant here  
Save love, and he has made me your idolater.

I am alone, beloved, but for you.  
Cast out the sea-look from your eyes and look  
On me, my utter self — no luring left,  
No unused wile to whet your appetite.

You know me all, and all of me is yours.  
I should have kept some harlot reticence  
To bate the surfeiting beast in you. Alas!  
Shrink not. Men's modesty is but in speech.

These are still gray eyes and pomegranate lips  
As once you called them, whispering through my hair  
In the dawn-stillness when the dawn-bird sang,  
And blissfully your drowsy kisses clung.

What is the loss that loses me your favor,  
Your misty voice, your eyes spilled full of color,  
Your hands whose very stillness in a curve  
Betrayed their greediness to reach for mine?

Ah, do you dream, lover no longer young,  
That those frail ecstasies can be lived over

If only on some new young breast you slumber  
And fresher lips yearn to you in the dark?

There is no second spring: your first is past  
And it was passed with me and you are mine!  
Or can a woman never claim as hers  
The heart of any man before it breaks?

Oh, is the love of man a sunset waning,  
A music slipping by, a one day's flower,  
Its very fleetingness the magic flaw  
That lures the fixed idolatrous love of woman?

Say not it is the sea that summons you,  
Or such affairs as chafing heroes plan:  
Hearted as that fierce pleading wanderer  
That once was you, nothing could draw you from me!

Belovèd, leave me not! There is such terror  
In the loneliness of souls that once were large!  
Though yours be never lonely, without you  
Mine were a gray rock in a wintry sun.

No use, no use! The touch of you tells me that.  
This body that I gave you when the gift  
Was begged as sole alternative to death  
Has served and staled. . . . The sea calls and you go.

Then go. . . . No, I should hate a sea-cold kiss;  
Remembered ones will do. . . . And I'll endure  
Loneliness with more profit and more pride  
Than you an aging man's concupiscence.



SPRING NIGHT IN THE MOUNTAINS

The lakes of the sky are clearer than day  
And all but the great stars are drowned,  
The glorying winds and the phosphorous clouds  
Fling the dark in swift coils on the ground,  
And the burning bleared moon in a halo of bronze  
Is dashed through the zenith like sound.

It should be cold when the trees are so bare  
Or the breezes spring-gentled for flight,  
Not torturing thus the dogwood that writhes  
Like a desperate immaculate light.  
I am afraid of the night and the spring  
And the terrible winds of the night!

Afraid of the rapture that grapples and tears  
Till the cords of my heart are torn,  
While the moonlight is crashing down canyons of cloud  
Like blasts from a great silver horn,  
And all the impenitent lovers, long dead,  
Are blown past, lip to lip, unforsworn.

### SIREN SONG

These are the seaward cliffs: let us sing and forget.  
The daylight dazzles upon us, cloudless and clean,  
And there, far down, where the crimson rocks are wet,  
Shallows mottle the sapphire sea with green.  
Come, let us forget,  
And, healed of ancient tears and whole of ancient teen,  
Sing with cold hearts of joy and no regret.

Fair from safe hill-tops seem the passing sails,  
Fairer perhaps because they always pass,  
And that far mountain-land, that quakes and pales  
In the noon stillness, fair too and far, alas!  
No rough sweet hails  
Will glitter up our glens, nor will a bruised bright grass  
Betray some parting's anguish in our vales.

We are accursed. Why should our thoughts yet cling  
To them that loved us when they knew us not,  
But learning us despised? Come, let us sing  
Forgetfully, loving this lovely spot  
Where the swallows swing  
Half down the cliff white-breasted, shrill, and the haze is hot  
Plumbago blue like a witch's eyes in spring.

Not the wind's fingers scribbling on the floor  
Of ocean write a rune more incomplete  
And mad than that fate marked above the door

Of our strange hearts, set open to all feet.

Oh, seek no more

Its meaning. Sing, let our songs be ignorantly sweet

Like upland waters pluming as they pour.

Alas! no music sounds here save our tears

And all things we have won except forgetfulness!

Our longing veers

Back to the native land of our distress —

No sights may bless

Eyes the red needle of endurance sears.

Then let us sing again with heartbreak wise and mad

The terrible songs we sang once ere we came,

And win the round windy ocean that was glad

To be one sorrowing echo of our shame.

Never, never, never may we unlearn

The secret with which we burn,

Never appease

Our mortal hurt with these

Felicities.

Again

Lift we our voices,

Our music old with bitterness and bane,

For we weave our songs and our songs are woven

Of pain,

And the heart that sings is the heart that is cloven.

A LETTER

Aid my heart in its fidelity!  
Though my unfaith were no regret to you  
It would betray, O careless heart I love,  
Not only you, but love itself, and me.  
That I am absent brings no pain to you,  
But every hour away is death to me —  
Send me some word, though heartless as your love,  
And aid my heart in its fidelity.