

The background is a classical painting. In the foreground, a young man with long, wavy hair lies on his back, looking upwards with a serene expression. He is draped in a blue and white cloth. To his right, a woman in a blue dress reclines, her head tilted back. In the upper right, a woman in a blue dress is seated, holding a white lamb. A cherub is visible on the left side of the painting. The overall scene is set against a backdrop of soft, golden light and architectural elements.

the  
Song  
of  
Songs

and other poems

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I.

**The song of songs, which is Solomon's.**

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:  
for thy love is better than wine.

Because of the savour of thy good ointments  
thy name is as ointment poured forth,  
therefore do the virgins love thee.

Draw me, we will run after thee:  
the king hath brought me into his chambers:

we will be glad and rejoice in thee,  
we will remember thy love  
more than wine: the upright love thee.

I am black, but comely,  
Oh ye daughters of Jerusalem,  
as the tents of Kedar,  
as the curtains of Solomon.  
Look not upon me, because I am black,  
because the sun hath looked upon me:

my mother's children were angry with me;  
they made me the keeper of the vineyards;  
but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Tell me, oh thou whom my soul loveth,  
where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock  
to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that  
turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

If thou know not, oh thou fairest among women,  
go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,  
and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

I have compared thee, oh my love,  
to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.  
Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels,  
thy neck with chains of gold.

We will make thee borders of gold  
with studs of silver.

While the king sitteth at his table,  
my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.  
A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me;  
he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

My beloved is unto me as a cluster  
of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.

Behold, thou art fair, my love;  
    behold, thou art fair;  
    thou hast doves' eyes.

Behold, thou art fair,  
my beloved, yea, pleasant:  
    also our bed is green.

The beams of our house are cedar,  
    and our rafters of fir.

I am the rose of Sharon,  
    and the lily of the valleys.

As the lily among thorns,  
so is my love among the daughters.

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,  
    so is my beloved among the sons.



I sat down under his shadow with great delight,  
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

He brought me to the banqueting house,  
and his banner over me was love.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples:  
for I am sick of love.

His left hand is under my head,  
and his right hand doth embrace me.

I charge you, oh ye daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the roes, and by the hinds of the field,  
that ye stir not up, nor awake my love,  
till he please.

The voice of my beloved! behold,  
he cometh leaping upon the mountains,  
skipping upon the hills.

My beloved is like a roe or a young hart:  
behold, he standeth behind our wall,  
he looketh forth at the windows,  
shewing himself through the lattice.  
My beloved spake, and said unto me,

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
For, lo, the winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
the time of the singing of birds is come,  
and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;  
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and  
the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.  
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Oh my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock,  
in the secret places of the stairs,  
let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;  
for sweet is thy voice,  
and thy countenance is comely.  
Take us the foxes, the little foxes,  
that spoil the vines:  
for our vines have tender grapes.

My beloved is mine, and I am his:  
he feedeth among the lilies.  
Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,

turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe  
or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

By night on my bed

I sought him whom my soul loveth:

I sought him, but I found him not.

I will rise now, and go about the city  
in the streets, and in the broad ways

I will seek him whom my soul loveth:

I sought him, but I found him not.

The watchmen that go about the city  
found me: to whom I said,

Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

It was but a little that I passed from them,  
but I found him whom my soul loveth:

I held him, and would not let him go,  
until I had brought him into my mother's house,  
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

I charge you, oh ye daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the roes, and by the hinds of the field,  
that ye stir not up, nor awake my love,  
till he please.

Who is this that cometh  
out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke,  
perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
with all powders of the merchant?  
Behold his bed, which is Solomon's;  
threescore valiant men are about it,  
of the valiant of Israel.  
They all hold swords, being expert in war:  
every man hath his sword upon his thigh  
because of fear in the night.  
King Solomon made himself a chariot  
of the wood of Lebanon.  
He made the pillars thereof of silver,  
the bottom thereof of gold,  
the covering of it of purple,  
the midst thereof being paved with love,  
for the daughters of Jerusalem.  
Go forth, oh ye daughters of Zion,  
and behold king Solomon with the crown  
wherewith his mother crowned him  
in the day of his espousals,  
and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

Behold, thou art fair, my love;  
    behold, thou art fair;  
thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks:  
    thy hair is as a flock of goats,  
    that appear from mount Gilead.  
Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep  
    that are even shorn,  
which came up from the washing;  
    whereof every one bear twins,  
    and none is barren among them.  
Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,  
and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like  
    a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.  
    Thy neck is like  
the tower of David builded for an armoury,  
    whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,  
    all shields of mighty men.  
Thy two breasts are like two young roes  
that are twins, which feed among the lilies.  
Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,  
    I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,  
    and to the hill of frankincense.

Thou art all fair, my love;  
there is no spot in thee.

Come with me from Lebanon,  
my spouse, with me from Lebanon:  
look from the top of Amana,  
from the top of Shenir and Hermon,  
from the lions' dens,  
from the mountains of the leopards.

Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my  
spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of  
thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!  
how much better is thy love than wine!  
and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!  
Thy lips, oh my spouse, drop as the honeycomb:  
honey and milk are under thy tongue;  
and the smell of thy garments  
is like the smell of Lebanon.

A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse;  
a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.  
Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,  
with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,

Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon,  
with all trees of frankincense; myrrh  
and aloes, with all the chief spices:  
A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,  
and streams from Lebanon.

Awake, oh north wind; and come, thou south;  
blow upon my garden,  
that the spices thereof may flow out.  
Let my beloved come into his garden,  
and eat his pleasant fruits.

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse:  
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;  
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;  
I have drunk my wine with my milk:

eat, oh friends; drink, yea,  
drink abundantly, oh beloved.

I sleep, but my heart waketh:  
it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh,

saying, "Open to me, my sister,  
my love, my dove, my undefiled:  
for my head is filled with dew,  
and my locks with the drops of the night.

I have put off my coat;

how shall I put it on?

I have washed my feet;

how shall I defile them?"

My beloved put in his hand

by the hole of the door,

and my bowels were moved for him.

I rose up to open to my beloved;

and my hands dropped with myrrh,

and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh,

upon the handles of the lock.

I opened to my beloved;

but my beloved had withdrawn himself,

and was gone: my soul failed when he spake:

I sought him, but I could not find him;

I called him, but he gave me no answer.

The watchmen that went about the city

found me, they smote me, they wounded me;



the keepers of the walls  
took away my veil from me.  
I charge you, oh daughters of Jerusalem,  
if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him,  
that I am sick of love.

What is thy beloved  
more than another beloved,  
oh thou fairest among women?  
what is thy beloved  
more than another beloved,  
that thou dost so charge us?

My beloved is white and ruddy,  
the chiefest among ten thousand.  
His head is as the most fine gold,  
his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.  
His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers  
of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.  
His cheeks are as a bed of spices,  
as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies,  
dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl:  
his belly is as bright ivory  
overlaid with sapphires.

His legs are as pillars of marble,  
set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is  
as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

His mouth is most sweet:  
yea, he is altogether lovely.

This is my beloved, and this is my friend,  
Oh daughters of Jerusalem.

Whither is thy beloved gone,  
Oh thou fairest among women?  
whither is thy beloved turned aside?  
that we may seek him with thee.

My beloved is gone  
down into his garden,  
to the beds of spices,  
to feed in the gardens,  
and to gather lilies.  
I am my beloved's,

and my beloved is mine:  
he feedeth among the lilies.

Thou art beautiful, O my love,  
as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem,  
terrible as an army with banners.  
Turn away thine eyes from me,  
for they have overcome me:  
thy hair is as a flock of goats  
that appear from Gilead.

Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep  
which go up from the washing,  
whereof every one beareth twins,  
and there is not one barren among them.

As a piece of a pomegranate  
are thy temples within thy locks.

There are threescore queens,  
and fourscore concubines,  
and virgins without number.

My dove, my undefiled is but one;  
she is the only one of her mother,  
she is the choice one of her that bare her.

The daughters saw her, and blessed her;  
yea, the queens and the concubines,  
and they praised her.

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,  
fair as the moon, clear as the sun,  
and terrible as an army with banners?  
I went down into the garden of nuts  
to see the fruits of the valley,  
and to see whether the vine flourished  
and the pomegranates budded.  
Or ever I was aware, my soul made me  
like the chariots of Amminadib.

Return, return, O Shulamite;  
return, return, that we may look upon thee.

What will ye see in the Shulamite?  
As it were the company of two armies.  
How beautiful are thy feet  
with shoes, oh prince's daughter!  
the joints of thy thighs are like jewels,

the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

Thy navel is like a round goblet,  
which wanteth not liquor:  
thy belly is like an heap of wheat  
set about with lilies.

Thy two breasts are like two young roes  
that are twins.

Thy neck is as a tower of ivory;  
thine eyes like the fishpools  
in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim:  
thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon  
which looketh toward Damascus.

Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,  
and the hair of thine head like purple;  
the king is held in the galleries.

How fair and how pleasant art thou,  
oh love, for delights!

This thy stature is like to a palm tree,  
and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.  
I said, I will go up to the palm tree,  
I will take hold of the boughs thereof:

now also thy breasts shall be  
as clusters of the vine,  
and the smell of thy nose like apples;

And the roof of thy mouth  
like the best wine for my beloved,  
that goeth down sweetly,  
causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.  
I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.  
Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;  
let us lodge in the villages.  
Let us get up early to the vineyards;  
let us see if the vine flourish,  
whether the tender grape appear,  
and the pomegranates bud forth:  
there will I give thee my loves.  
The mandrakes give a smell,  
and at our gates are  
all manner of pleasant fruits,  
new and old, which I have laid up  
for thee, oh my beloved.

Oh that thou wert as my brother,  
that sucked the breasts of my mother!  
when I should find thee without,  
I would kiss thee;  
yea, I should not be despised.  
I would lead thee,  
and bring thee into my mother's house,  
who would instruct me:  
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine  
of the juice of my pomegranate.  
His left hand should be under my head,  
and his right hand should embrace me.  
I charge you, oh daughters of Jerusalem,  
that ye stir not up, nor awake my love,  
until he please.

Who is this that cometh up  
from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

I raised thee up under the apple tree:  
there thy mother brought thee forth:  
there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart,  
as a seal upon thine arm:  
for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as  
the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire,  
which hath a most vehement flame.  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
neither can the floods drown it:  
if a man would give all the substance  
of his house for love,  
it would utterly be contemned.

We have a little sister,  
and she hath no breasts:  
what shall we do for our sister  
in the day when she shall be spoken for?  
If she be a wall,  
we will build upon her a palace of silver:  
and if she be a door,  
we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

I am a wall, and my breasts like towers:  
then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.



Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon;  
he let out the vineyard unto keepers;  
every one for the fruit thereof  
was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.  
My vineyard, which is mine, is before me:  
thou, oh Solomon, must have a thousand,  
and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

Thou that dwellest in the gardens,  
the companions hearken to thy voice:  
cause me to hear it.

Make haste, my beloved,  
and be thou like to a roe  
or to a young hart  
upon the mountains of spices.

-----

## II.

Is there anything sweeter than these hours of love,  
when we're together, and my heart races?  
For what is better than embracing and fondling  
when you visit me and we surrender to delights?

If you reach to caress my thigh,  
I will offer you my breast also -- it's soft;  
it won't jab you or thrust you away!

Will you leave me because you're hungry?  
Are you ruled by your belly?  
Will you leave me because you need something to wear?  
I have chests full of fine linen!  
Will you leave me because you're thirsty?  
Here, suck my breasts!  
They're full to overflowing, and all for you!

I glory in the hours of our embracings;  
my joy is incalculable!

The thrill of your love spreads through my body  
like honey in water,  
like a drug mixed with spices,  
like wine mingled with water.

Oh, that you would speed to see your sister  
like a stallion in heat,  
like a bull to his heifer!  
For the heavens have granted us  
love like flames igniting straw,  
desire like the falcon's free-falling frenzy!

-----

### III.

In the spring twilight  
the full moon is shining:  
Girls take their places  
as though around an altar

-----

And their feet move  
rhythmically, as tender  
feet of Cretan girls  
danced once around an  
altar of love, crushing  
a circle in the soft  
smooth flowering grass

-----

You came, and I was mad to have you:  
your breath cooled my heart  
that was burning with desire.

He is more than a hero  
he is a god in my eyes--  
the man who is allowed  
to sit beside you-- he  
who listens intimately  
to the sweet murmur of  
your voice, the enticing  
laughter that makes my own  
heart beat fast. If I meet  
you suddenly, I can't  
speak--my tongue is broken;  
a thin flame runs under  
my skin; seeing nothing,  
hearing only my own ears  
drumming, I drip with sweat;  
trembling shakes my body  
and I turn paler than  
dry grass. At such times  
death isn't far from me

-----

#### IV.

Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love,  
and let us judge all the rumors of the old men  
to be worth just one penny!

The suns are able to fall and rise:  
When that brief light has fallen for us,  
we must sleep a never ending night.

Give me a thousand kisses, then another hundred,  
then another thousand, then a second hundred,  
then yet another thousand more, then another hundred.

Then, when we have made many thousands,  
we will mix them all up so that we don't know,  
and so that no one can be jealous of us when he  
finds out how many kisses we have shared.

-----

## V.

The Sun, the source of light, by beauty's pow'r  
Once am'rous grew; then hear the Sun's amour.

Venus, and Mars, with his far-piercing eyes  
This God first spy'd; this God first all things spies.  
Stung at the sight, and swift on mischief bent,  
To haughty Juno's shapeless son he went:  
The Goddess, and her God gallant betray'd,  
And told the cuckold, where their pranks were play'd.

Poor Vulcan soon desir'd to hear no more,  
He drop'd his hammer, and he shook all o'er:  
Then courage takes, and full of vengeful ire  
He heaves the bellows, and blows fierce the fire:  
From liquid brass, tho' sure, yet subtile snares  
He forms, and next a wond'rous net prepares,  
Drawn with such curious art, so nicely sly,  
Unseen the meshes cheat the searching eye.  
Not half so thin their webs the spiders weave,  
Which the most wary, buzzing prey deceive.  
These chains, obedient to the touch, he spread

In secret foldings o'er the conscious bed:

The conscious bed again was quickly prest  
By the fond pair, in lawless raptures blest.

Mars wonder'd at his Cytherea's charms,  
More fast than ever lock'd within her arms.

While Vulcan th' iv'ry doors unbarr'd with care,  
Then call'd the Gods to view the sportive pair:

The Gods throng'd in, and saw in open day,  
Where Mars, and beauty's queen, all naked, lay.

O! shameful sight, if shameful that we name,  
Which Gods with envy view'd, and could not blame;  
But, for the pleasure, wish'd to bear the shame.

Each Deity, with laughter tir'd, departs,  
Yet all still laugh'd at Vulcan in their hearts.

-----



## VI.

In all the clouds he sees her light robes trail,  
And roses seem beholden to her face;  
O'er scented balustrade the scented gale  
Blows warm from Spring, and dew-drops form apace.

Her outline on the mountain he can trace,  
Now leans she from the tower in moonlight pale.  
A flower-girt branch grows sweeter from the dew.

A spirit of snow and rain unheeded calls.  
Who wakes to memory in these palace walls?  
Fei-yen! -- but in the robes an Empress knew.

The most renowned of blossoms, most divine  
Of those whose conquering glances overthrow  
Cities and kingdoms, for his sake combine  
And win the ready smiles that ever flow  
From royal lips. What matter if the snow  
Blot out the garden? She shall still recline  
Upon the scented balustrade and glow  
With spring that thrills  
her warm blood into wine.

-----

## VII.

Her golden tresses were spread loose to air,  
And by the wind in thousand tangles blown,  
And a sweet light beyond all brightness shown  
From those grand eyes, though now of brilliance bare;  
And did that face a flush of feeling wear?  
I now thought yes, then no, the truth unknown.  
My heart was then for love like tinder grown,  
What wonder if it flamed with sudden flare?  
Not like the walk of mortals was her walk,  
But as when angels glide: and seemed her talk  
With other than mere human voice, to flow.  
A spirit heavenly, a living sun  
I saw, and if she be no longer so,  
A wound heals not, because the bow's undone.

-----

## VIII.

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all:  
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?  
No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call --  
All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.

Then if for my love thou my love receivest,  
I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest;  
But yet be blamed if thou this self deceivest  
By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.

I do forgive thy robb'ry, gentle thief,  
Although thou steal thee all my poverty;  
And yet love knows it is a greater grief  
To bear love's wrong than hate's known injury.  
Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
Kill me with spites, yet we must not be foes.

-----

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come:  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

-----

Cupid laid by his brand and fell asleep:  
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,  
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep  
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground;  
Which borrowed from this holy fire of Love,  
A dateless lively heat, still to endure,  
And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove  
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure.  
But at my mistress' eye Love's brand new-fired,  
The boy for trial needs would touch my breast;  
I, sick withal, the help of bath desired,  
And thither hied, a sad distempered guest,

But found no cure, the bath for my help lies  
Where Cupid got new fire; my mistress' eyes.

-----

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

-----

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

----

My love is as a fever, longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease,  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.  
My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,

Hath left me, and I desperate now approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except.  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest.  
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,  
At random from the truth vainly expressed,  
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,  
Who art as black as Hell, as dark as night.

-----

## IX.

Drink to me, only, with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine;  
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,  
And I'll not look for wine.

The thirst that from the soul doth rise,  
Doth ask a drink divine:  
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee, late, a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honouring thee,  
As giving it a hope, that there  
It could not withered be.  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st back to me:  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself, but thee.

---



## X.

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,  
Old Time is still a-flying:  
And this same flower that smiles today  
Tomorrow will be dying.  
The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he's a-getting;  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he's to setting.  
That age is best which is the first,  
When youth and blood are warmer;  
But being spent, the worse, and worst  
Times still succeed the former.  
Then be not coy, but use your time,  
And while ye may, go marry:  
For having lost but once your prime,  
You may for ever tarry.

-----

## XI

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defy,  
Until I labour, I in labour lie.

The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,  
Is tir'd with standing though he never fight.  
Off with that girdle, like heaven's Zone glistening,  
But a far fairer world encompassing.

Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,  
That th'eyes of busy fools may be stopped there.

Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chime,  
Tells me from you, that now it is bed time.

Off with that happy busk, which I envy,  
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.  
Your gown going off, such beauteous state reveals,  
As when from flowery meads th'hill's shadow steals.

Off with that wiry Coronet and shew  
The hairy Diadem which on you doth grow:  
Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread  
In this love's hallow'd temple, this soft bed.  
In such white robes, heaven's Angels used to be  
Received by men; Thou Angel bringst with thee  
A heaven like Mahomet's Paradise; and though

Ill spirits walk in white, we easily know,  
By this these Angels from an evil sprite,  
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.  
Licence my roving hands, and let them go,  
Before, behind, between, above, below.  
O my America! my new-found-land,  
My kingdom, safeliest when with one man mann'd,  
My Mine of precious stones, My Empirie,  
How blest am I in this discovering thee!  
To enter in these bonds, is to be free;  
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.  
Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee,  
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,  
To taste whole joys. Gems which you women use  
Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in men's views,  
That when a fool's eye lighteth on a Gem,  
His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.  
Like pictures, or like books' gay coverings made  
For lay-men, are all women thus array'd;  
Themselves are mystic books, which only we  
(Whom their imputed grace will dignify)  
Must see reveal'd. Then since that I may know,

As liberally, as to a Midwife, shew  
Thy self: cast all, yea, this white linen hence,  
There is no penance due to innocence.  
To teach thee, I am naked first; why then  
What needst thou have more covering than a man.

-----

## XII.

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee;  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me ye women if you can.  
I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold,  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay,  
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we live, in love lets so persevere,  
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

### XIII.

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.  
One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
How pure, how dear their dwelling place.  
And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!

-----

## XIV.

Helen thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicean barks of yore,  
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
The weary way-worn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
To the glory that was Greece,  
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo ! in yon brilliant window-niche  
How statue-like I me thee stand,  
The agate lamp within thy hand!  
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which  
Are Holy-land!

----

## XV.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love with a passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

---

## XVI.

Lying asleep between the strokes of night  
I saw my love lean over my sad bed,  
Pale as the duskiest lily's leaf or head,  
Smooth-skinned and dark, with bare throat made to bite,  
Too wan for blushing and too warm for white,  
But perfect-coloured without white or red.  
And her lips opened amorously, and said—  
I wist not what, saving one word—Delight.  
And all her face was honey to my mouth,  
And all her body pasture to mine eyes;  
The long lithe arms and hotter hands than fire,  
The quivering flanks, hair smelling of the south,  
The bright light feet, the splendid supple thighs  
And glittering eyelids of my soul's desire.

-----



## XVII.

Come slowly -- Eden  
Lips unused to thee --  
Bashful -- sip thy jasmines --  
As the fainting bee --

Reaching late his flower,  
Round her chamber hums --  
Counts his nectars -- alights --  
And is lost in balms!

----

## XVIII.

i carry your heart with me  
i carry your heart with me(i carry it in  
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere  
i go you go, my dear;and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing,my darling)  
i fear

no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want  
no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;which grows  
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart with me(i carry it in my heart)

-----

Lady, i will touch you with my mind.  
Touch you and touch and touch  
until you give  
me suddenly a smile, shyly obscene

(lady i will  
touch you with my mind.) Touch  
you, that is all,

lightly and you utterly will become  
with infinite ease

the poem which i do not write.

-----

it may not always be so;and i say  
that if your lips,which i have loved,should touch  
another's,and your dear strong fingers clutch  
his heart,as mine in time not far away;  
if on another's face your sweet hair lay

in such a silence as i know,or such  
great writhing words as,uttering overmuch,  
stand helplessly before the spirit at bay;

if this should be,i say if this should be—  
you of my heart,send me a little word;  
that i may go unto him,and take his hands,  
saying,Accept all happiness from me.  
Then shall i turn my face,and hear one bird  
sing terribly afar in the lost lands.

-----

she being Brand  
-new; and you  
know consequently a  
little stiff i was  
careful of her and(having  
thoroughly oiled the universal  
joint tested my gas felt of  
her radiator made sure her springs were 0.  
K.)i went right to it flooded-the-carburetor

cranked her  
up, slipped the clutch (and then somehow got into  
reverse she  
kicked what  
the hell) next  
minute i was back in neutral tried and  
again slowly, barely nudging (my  
lever Right-  
oh and her gears being in  
A 1 shape passed  
from low through  
second-in-to-high like  
greased lightning) just as we turned the corner of  
Divinity  
avenue i touched the accelerator and give  
her the juice, good  
(it  
was the first ride and believe i we was  
happy to see how nice she acted right up to  
the last minute coming back down by the Public  
Gardens i slammed on  
the

internalexpanding  
&  
externalcontracting  
brakes Bothatonce and  
brought allofher tremB  
-ling  
to a: dead.  
stand-  
;Still)

-----

### XIX.

I woke up this mornin' with an awful achin' head  
I woke up this mornin' with a awful achin' head  
My new man had left me just a room and a empty bed

Bought me a coffee grinder, got the best one I could find  
Bought me a coffee grinder, got the best one I could find  
So he could grind my coffee, 'cause he had a brand new grind

He's a deep sea diver with a stroke that can't go wrong  
He's a deep sea diver with a stroke that can't go wrong  
He can touch the bottom and his wind holds out so long

He knows how to thrill me and he thrills me night and day  
Lord, he knows how to thrill me, he thrills me night and day  
He's got a new way of lovin' almost takes my breath away

Lord, he's got that sweet somethin', and I told my gal friend Lou  
He's got that sweet somethin', and I told my gal friend Lou  
From the way she's ravin', she must have gone and tried it too.

When my bed get empty, make me feel awful mean and blue  
When my bed get empty, make me feel awful mean and blue  
My springs are gettin' rusty, sleepin' single like I do

Bought him a blanket, pillow for his head at night  
Bought him a blanket, pillow for his head at night  
Then I bought him a mattress so he could lay just right

He came home one evening with his spirit way up high

He came home one evening with his spirit way up high  
What he had to give me made me wring my hands and cry

He give me a lesson that I never had before  
He give me a lesson that I never had before  
When he got through teachin' me, from my elbow down was sore

He boiled my first cabbage and he made it awful hot  
He boiled my first cabbage and he made it awful hot  
Then he put in the bacon, it overflowed the pot

When you get good lovin', never go and spread the news  
Yeah, it will double cross you and leave you  
with them empty bed blues.



## XX.

### I Am Vertical

But I would rather be horizontal.  
I am not a tree with my root in the soil  
Sucking up minerals and motherly love  
So that each March I may gleam into leaf,  
Nor am I the beauty of a garden bed  
Attracting my share of Ahs  
and spectacularly painted,  
Unknowing I must soon unpetal.  
Compared with me, a tree is immortal  
And a flower-head not tall, but more startling,  
And I want the one's longevity  
and the other's daring.

Tonight, in the infinitesimal light of the stars,  
The trees and the flowers have been strewing  
their cool odors.  
I walk among them,  
but none of them are noticing.

Sometimes I think that when I am sleeping  
I must most perfectly resemble them —  
Thoughts gone dim.

It is more natural to me, lying down.  
Then the sky and I are in open conversation,  
And I shall be useful when I lie down finally:  
Then the trees may touch me for once,  
and the flowers have time for me.

-----

## XXI.

Whatever happens with us, your body  
will haunt mine--tender, delicate  
your lovemaking, like the half-curved frond  
of the fiddlehead fern in forests  
just washed by sun. Your traveled, generous, thighs  
between which my whole face has come and come--  
the innocence and wisdom of the place  
my tongue has found there--  
the live, insatiate dance of your nipples in my mouth--  
your touch on me, firm, protective, searching me out,  
your strong tongue and slender fingers  
reaching where I had been waiting years for you in  
my rose-wet cave--whatever happens, this is.

-----

## XXII

I could take the Harlem night  
and wrap around you,  
Take the neon lights and make a crown,  
Take the Lenox Avenue busses,  
Taxis, subways,  
And for your love song tone their rumble down.  
Take Harlem's heartbeat,  
Make a drumbeat,  
Put it on a record, let it whirl,  
And while we listen to it play,  
Dance with you till day --  
Dance with you, my sweet brown Harlem girl.

-----

## XXIII.

And yet one arrives somehow,  
finds himself loosening the hooks of her dress  
in a strange bedroom--  
feels the autumn  
dropping its silk and linen leaves  
about her ankles.  
The tawdry veined body emerges  
twisted upon itself  
like a winter wind . . . !

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