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Metropolitan Morning
METROPOLITAN MORNING

Here is a wonderful morning
Brittle, clean and sharp to the taste
The coast wind blows down from the north
Crisp with remembered snows
Keened with smarting kiss of icy floes...

The city lies
Fresh painted on new-minted skies
Her hard hills torn
Dark and untamed under the lacing streets
That fasten where her marge still water meets.

High on her brow cathedral towers rise
To two green crosses sharp-scratched on the skies
The nuns' pale chancel-song
Floats out along the dull and shadowy paints
That robe the tired saints
Fixed-smiling over their fifty trembling lights
Flickering for penny prayers.

The little bell
That rings to tell
The word made flesh, rings not so well this morn
As all the chimes of all the leaves that call
To pagan worship at the miracle
Of this deistic dawn.
The long thin shadow falls
Falls from the roofs of the double campanile
Falls across the green lawns of the richest man
Falls across the stinking alley behind his barns
The long thin shadow falls.
Christ the fascist stretches on a velvet cross
Christ the man walks free.
Quickly past the towers
Quickly past the nuns
Quickly past the frail lace shadows of the dancing leaves
Counterpointing the Te Deum . . .
So quickly . . . past . . .

Here on his grim trimmed lawn
Where each advancing blade knows thou shalt not
And tall pink roses bloom in ordered time,
Here the old man, hammed down in his deep gold
Sure of his streaks of fat and lean
And knowing well his coupons and percents
And the immutable fact that enough sow ears massed together
Can make the silkiest of purses . . .
He, knowing all these solid, concrete, unstable, shifting facts
Lifts up a hard-rolled sheaf of headlines from the lawn
Flaps it out arrogantly,
Calls
“Good morning!
I see that the alphabet dictatorship is strengthening!
The American spine is more upright
Funds for relief are buying cosmetics for the political mistresses
And the Montana crops are mildewing in the ground.
In California . . . .”

His hands tremble and he stops
Staring over the top of the paper with oldening eyes.

In the stinking alley back of his barns
Three children
Ragged . . . dirty with long unwashed dirt
Hungry with a hunger that has passed into stillness
Are playing a game . . .
A game of revolution
With lathes for swords and guns
They marshal invisible armies.
The painted heartbreak wandering for a price
Who mothered them
Leans against the door of the shack where they tumble in
For food and for sleep
If this is food
And such is sleep . . .
And watches their game.
Three steps ahead, you with the paper hat and the robin's feather
Three steps ahead, you with the thin arms like bones under skin
Not flesh...
Three steps ahead, you with stark hunger in the blue sockets of your eyes
And young mutiny on your strained lips
Three steps ahead... shout...
Three steps ahead... shout...
Three steps ahead... shout, weep, cry, yell
Three steps ahead and tear your throat for the liberation
Of your awful hunger
Your young hunger
Your hunger born of thirst...

The sleek old man frowns... lifts his head angrily
As he hears the echo of the play...
The echo of the advancing game that is tracking him
Passing the pink roses and the marble steps
Walking with his feet
And writing hard hieroglyphics of coming headlines
On his brain...

Here is a wonderful morning
Brittle, clean and sharp to the taste.
TO E. J., SINGING

Once, once she was Endymion
On Latmos' silver-flooded hill . . .
Deep in her music's glowing tone
The dream of Diane lingers still.
She sings . . . and every nightingale
Is silent for the memory
Of beauty bright without her veil
For one dark shepherd lad to see . . .

Oh, every pulse that ever broke
Before that marvel of love's choice
Thrums living in her melody
And dreams again within her voice.

Spellbound yet free the shepherd boy
Sings love on love and joy on joy.
WINTERKILL

Lutes have been playing, and there has been song
Joy like a whirlwind . . . peace like a still pool . . .
A little hope . . . not lasting overlong
Latchstring for laughter's wiseman and pride's fool.
Fires of ardent dreams have burned their way
Into the dusty ash of discontent
And all that you might plead or I might say
Has never been the thing that we have meant.

We have choked often on our bitter bread
Denying hunger, scornful of our thirst
And now we walk as walk the quiet dead
Phantoms of love . . . moving in this accursed
White grief down-crowding like a settled snow
Over old landmarks and the way to go.
SURETY

I should die a little if you left me
A little more if you forgot me
But the depth of death should I know
If ever I ceased to remember
You
Standing in a doorway waiting.
Is this the reason I am sure there is no death?
UNTRAPPED LEGEND

The lovely hieroglyphics of the snow
The rabbit track
The quail's quick-running print
Where do they go?
The wild deer's sure-cleft tread
The stately mark and slight
Of some swift-brushing wing that swept to flight
White to the moon and silver to the night . . .

Your footprint here . . .

The jealous sun stares down
Intent on melting out the delicate story
That can be written only under the moon.

The lovely hieroglyphics of the snow
Where do they go?
Nazareth
JOSEPH

What were the thoughts of Joseph
Fashioning in Nazareth a cradle for the Little Lord Jesus?
The thoughts of Joseph, the son of kings,
The scion of Solomon and of David
Whose blood, pulsing against a carpenter’s plane
Had coursed through hands that held scepters.

What were the thoughts of Joseph
Minded to put away Jehovah’s woman
The thoughts of Joseph, the husband of Mary
Whose soft flesh, espoused to him
Lying beside him, warmly sweet and desirable
Yet never espoused, was heavy with divinity?

What were the thoughts of Joseph
Into whose dreams strode angels declaring the Godhead?
The thoughts of Joseph, waiting the King of Kings
He, the son of kings guarding the Light of the world!
Would he have given the Star and the Myrrh and the Temple
The Loaves and the Fishes, the red-running wine of Cana,
Lazarus, and the Thirty Pieces of Silver
THE CROSS
To have held for his own against all the hosts of heaven
This woman . . . his love . . . Mary?

What were the thoughts of Joseph
Fashioning in Nazareth a cradle for the little Lord Christ?
MARY

Hail, Mary full of grace!
The little Judean maid
Lay with her babe in her arms
Angels about her, joyous, attent,
And close beside her knelt Joseph.

Whispered a shepherd lad from beyond the door,
"The Master of the Inn has word
Three Kings are approaching . . ."
Joseph gestured for silence but Mary had heard
Opening deep, dark eyes she looked from the manger
Looked at the cherubim and the seraphim
Saw the bright shadow of Gabriel's wings
Across the pale sky . . .
Slowly turning her head she whispered to Joseph,
"The Lord is with me."

"The Lord is with thee," chanted the angels
"And blessed art Thou amongst women"

"The Lord is with me," she murmured
"Him have I borne in travail . . ."
Raptly she gazed on the holy Babe
Pressed Him more close in her arms.
"Leave me," she said to the circling angels
"This hour alone with my Son.
This one still hour before He belongs to the world
This one still hour before he belongs to eternity.
Leave us, she said
And turned her adoring eyes
To the face of the Word made Flesh.

Slowly the angels departed. Their songs came softly
Into the manger greying with Bethlehem dawn.

Joseph lifted his wondering, tear-stained face
Spoke slowly and harshly, as though in a dream...

"Blessed art thou among women, oh Mary. Blessed is thy fruit
Jesus, the Son of God."

Weary was Joseph, spent with the weight of the miracle.
Fearful was he, guarding the small dark maid.

"Mary," he whispered," Mother of God,
Holy Mary, pray for me!"

And the pale young virgin smiled and answered
"I pray . . ." and looked on her child.

The song of the shepherds echoed the song of the angels
Echoed the words of Joseph.

Holy Mary, mother of God
Pray for me . . . pray for me."

And Mary, kissing the dear small hand of the Christ
Tenderly whispered . . . "I pray . . ."
Watching her as she lay, Joseph remembered
How she was ever a gentle and quiet woman...
Light was her step and soft her word
And her way was loving in service.
Slowly he rose from his knees
Blinded and stumbling went out under the Star
And left them alone together.
Left the Lord of Heaven
Left the Judean maid.

And Mary said to the Christ

"Child of my flesh I adore Thee.
That Thou art God I adore
But more
That Thou art my son.
Through all the years before Thee
Through all the revilement
The scorn and the worship and glory
Thou wilt be my God
But first Thou wilt be my child.
The thorns that will pierce Thee
Have first pierced me.
The nails that will tear Thee
Have first torn me.
The death Thou wilt know
I have known first. These three...
The thorns and the nails and the death
I know now...
Knowing that Thou art God
Little and young to hold
Mine
Yet Lord and Creator of earth and of me
And never mine."

Sudden her tears ran down
Sudden she turned her head
From the heavenly radiance beside her
Sought with her deep imploring eyes
A kindly familiar face...

"Joseph..." she whispered..."Joseph!"
JESUS

He emptied himself of glory
And the old prophecies filled him.
He was required of his generation.

The boy in Nazareth
Sweeping the shop of Joseph
Running small errands for Mary
Sealed his soul
With the glittering seal of mysticism
And the dark seal of denial.

His rich young heart
He wrung dry of desire
His warm Judean blood
He forced into the coursing of abstinence.

An hundred times was he crucified
Before the last and merciful tree
Received his outstretched weariness.

All men born into the terrible heritage
Of the love of humanity
Are marked for Calvary.
But this man was star-marked for the ages.

Bravely he walked with Peter and Paul
And with John tenderly
But his vision was blind with service.
Submitted he meekly to Mary
And gently dealt he with Martha
With pity he sheltered the woman they waited to stone.

He blessed her.

Deeply into Gethsemane
Bleeding through the Via Crucis
Her love followed him.

Was his last moment sweet
With memory of the Magdalen
And her tears upon his feet?
NOW THE WORDS ARE DONE

The words are done.
My silver self in your two arms I lay
In this sweet space between the night and day . . .
Stars tangle in the trees . . .
Moon on the withering water
Long, slow-raking silver gathers the waves . . .
The whispering, withering water runs away
From the night to run away run away from the day . . .
Something of echo silverly
Something of echo from lips long kissed to dust
Something of echo from swords long quickening with rust . . .
Something of echo runs silverly
Into my coral heart . . .
I am that quiet room
That waiting stillness
Where your stirring seed
Will grow to match your pride
And walk in your bright shadow . . .
On this slight coast of all eternity
I am that room . . .
The darkling blade of your face
Draws sharp against my eyes
To cleave me into blindness . . .
Silverly am I one with other rooms and swords and tides . . .
Prayerfully, love . . .
Enter me gently . . .

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And These Are Love Songs
QUERY

Are you the one?
Is the long search then ended
For dear companionship and proud content?
In your deep eyes intent
I seem to read this wonder mirroring mine
And in their depths I see
The shadow of my own sad quest
The answer
To my accursed unrest.

Sweet, you are sweet!
I will that this be true!

Love is so pure in some of its manifestations
So crystal at its source and yet so wise
A happy child at play among young blossoms
Suddenly lifting veiled mysterious eyes.

Sweet, you are sweet!
I will that this be true!

Happy the heart that holds through passionate venture
The limpid remembrance of its shining source
And deep and purely finds its consummation
As surely as a river finds its course.

Sweet you are sweet!
I will that this be true
That all my discontent find rest in you
Are you the one?

Ah, sweet, you are the one!
AMOR AMORIS

In the oblivion that men call death
I shall not breathe your breath
Nor seal your eyes
With softly folded kisses
Nor shall I
Hold your deep palm upon my deeper breast
Nor drink your tears
Nor whisper on your smile...
But I shall lie
Straightly and silent
Quiet through and through
With the heart-ravening miracle of you.
CANTO AMORIS

Vestured with all the glory of the rose
And golden-hearted as the royal flower
You come to me with the bright mystery
Upon you of love's immortal hour.
And I kneel down before the miracle
Knowing myself unworthy of your touch
Not daring to believe that you are mine
Fearing thus greatly and yet longing much . . .

Yet were you but a beggar in the rain
And blind . . . and dumb . . . and seeking me in pain
With your infirmity . . . still would I see
The godliness within that poverty
Still would behold you, earth's most radiant thing
And lift my dazzled eyes to brook . . . a king!
MORS AMORIS

Trail, trail all plumes and bend all branches low
For dying love . . . oh nightingale and thrush
Be still . . . let all harmonious music hush
To mourn this passing . . . murmurous and slow
Let all streams run . . . and all green leaves be furled
That with no haunting memory love may go
But sweetly as he lived, nor ever know
That with him goes the light of all the world.

Still, still . . . nor hold him by one haunting breath
From his too early death.
Let not one desperate call nor sob of pain
Give him brief life again
But let him wane
Golden and blind and heedless as he came.
LOVE

Terrible two-edged blade deep in the heart
That cuts with pain and bliss at the least breath
Bright unregretted death quivering with life
Shall I draw thee, and start
The fast-ebbing stream of release that darkens to peace
Shadowing down across all remembrance of wound
Quickening with loss into long stillness?

Better the candle hot-dripped on the slumbering wing
And the anguish of flight
Than never to trace
The stabbing vision of one haunting face
Through the long lightless night . . .

Terrible two-edged blade turn . . . turn again
Rend me with bliss . . . pierce me with pain . . .
On the transfixed blade of hope low-laid
I would drop down to darkness.

Better the torn sky and the shriveled tree
Than that this never be . . .
The hard salt blood on the lips of pain
The cry at dawn for the empty tomorrow
And the black tears of sorrow
Than to go dreamless again . . . than to go dreamless again . . .
SONNET

Where I have loved you let some flower grow
Fragile and fleeting as your thought of me
Like those pale-lanterned moonlit buds that blow
In sweetness near some earth-bound, heaven-touched tree.
Where I have loved you let some wilful brook
Wend singing morning through the forest shade
Forever in its flash your limpid look
And in its flow the song your words have made.

Where I have loved you let the last light rest
Quiet with shadow, luminous with dream
More still than silver in the earth's warm breast
More wistful than the pale parselene.

Where I have loved you let these three things be
More potent than a stone to memory.
THE PAINTED BIRD

You are the painted bird, the stranger from Paradise
Flying beside me in this space
Your frail wing's grace
Drifting along the last ray of the sun
Your darkling delicate head
Lifted against the heart-breaking blue
That hides from you
Fair visions of your jeweled trees
Your garden eastward in Eden...

Once perhaps you flew
Trailing diaphanous plumes in scented air
Where God walked at the close of day
And heard Him say

"They are gone
I have banished them
Love and the beloved are departed into pain
The woman and the sullen fruit are gone
And yet they mocked me as they passed the sword...
'Love is enough,' they cried
'Love is enough for Paradise denied...
Perhaps He sighed
Having created the thing He could not share
The one thing greater than its Maker...

Frail painted bird
Did you so fly?
Did God so say?
HUNGER

I would be young for you! Once more would wear
That face of youth so desperately fair
With all doomed beauty! I would be alight
With radiance as a happy star. And bright
With all your visions of desired delight.
I would restore the fallen years, and through
Some sweet enchantment give my youth to you.
This spirit that you love would I return
To some dear guise! Some alabaster urn
Of young fair flesh, that you at least might know
All answers in one woman, and might go
Heedless of all but me!
I would be young for you! Once more would wear
That face of youth so desperately fair
With all doomed beauty!
If I must remember you at all . . . and why should I
Since memory is a weakness . . . that sort of memory
Which tells dead prayers along a wornout string of beads . . .

You and I threw away the traditional rosary of pearls
And made a string of rose-haws on which we hung
A wishbone
A bookmark
And a little ivory clown . . .

Since the wishbone is broken
And I have the biggest half . . .
The bookmark is lost . . .
The rosehaws are dry and dry . . .
And the ivory clown . . .
Well, never mind the ivory clown . . .

Anyway, if I must remember you at all
Let me think of you as I didn't see you
When I wouldn't look out of the window after you
When we . . . didn't . . . say . . . goodbye.
TO ONE UNFORGOTTEN

I do not need
Some stranger journey to an alien place
Or the presumption of some curious face
Or jargoned Indian message from afar
To bring you to me...

I but turn my head...
But stir...
You are not dead...
But surely as the light
As straightly dear
As the enclosing wonder of the night...
Love... you are here...
ALEA JACTA EST

When the time comes to set above my dust
Some small, insistent marble, with its thrust
Against forgetting, . . . no word let it bear,
Nor any legend. I shall not be there
To watch the shredding satin, or to feel
Life in the womb of earth. Let it reveal
No syllable that graced a lover's plea,
Or lay in pain on screeds of agony
Or ran along the lip of facile fame
To swift oblivion. This poor, stupid name
Has none of me to write along a stone
For men to think on. Plant for me, alone,
Some rebel rose that knows no garden school . . .
To mark me for a woman . . . and a fool.
Other Verse
AT THE LOOM

Here is the pattern. I know just one thing . . .
The weaving has left me thorns in the fingers
But they are thorns of great beauty . . .
I would not give them back
For any memory of shorter hours and more pay
At the loom.
A POET BEGAN TO SING

It was long ago and the spring was dark
But the water rippled and ran
And thirst was born and fever stark
For the singing water that mocked the lark
Thirst that began when the world began
And racked a heart
And tortured a heart
And sent it crying down the years
For the hidden water, the brilliant water
The singing water . . . the singing water . . .
It was long ago and the spring was dark
But the water rippled and chimed
And its silver bells and its crystal bells
Rang out in the music that no word tells
Ringing for fever
Ringing for thirst
Thirst that was born when the world was born
To send a heart on a search forlorn
For the luring water, the calling water
The singing water . . . the singing water . . .
It was long ago and the spring was dark
But the water rippled and laughed
And a hundred songs welled up from the spring.
In the cloven rock for the heart to sing
Poisoned with beauty and fever stark
Sick with love and mocking the lark
And cool and cool
From the limpid pool
The secret water rippled and ran
Rippled and ran
Rippled and ran
And a poet began to sing
Singing water . . . singing water . . .
Singing water . . . singing water . . .

It was long ago and the spring was dark . . .
CREDO

Say it I may, believe it I must:
Never a good man ends in dust!

Maybe he straddles a comet's tail,
Or comes back flailing the earth in hail;

Maybe he swims in the ocean's foam,
Or swings in a vine round the door of his home,

But the texture of man is a texture free,
And never closed in a clod will be,

His flesh may purple, his shroud may spot,
His eyes may fade, and his heart may rot,

His bones may powder and bleach the sand,
And a farmer's plow turn them deep in the land,

But his soul--immortal--with these has done,
And somehow, somewhere, the man goes on!
STILLNESS

With midnight sharpened ears I hear
The insect feeding on the leaf
I hear the springback of the grass
After the furry cat-foot thief . . .
Hard metal moonlight on the hill
Struck by the padded gongs of night
Rouses my senses to a flood
Of sound past sound, of sight past sight . . .
The cadences of stillness rise
In quiet, warring harmony . . .
Stars call, earth answers, and the hours
Echo with muted mystery . . .
And throbbing like a jungle drum
My heavy muffled heartbeats come.
I KNOW

I have been married, and I know
Just how a marriage ought to go.
The lad I wedded was tall and fine,
With eyes like October, and words like wine.
His heart was a cradle when I was sad,
His song was a triumph when I was glad.
If I asked for the moon, he brought it down,
If I wanted a fool, he played the clown.
He was wise and tender, and taught me, too,
The little I know from the much he knew.
His lands were wide, and his horses fleet,
And a whisper ran when he walked in the street.
His step was free, and his heart was high,
And he loved the Gods that money can buy.
And I shall be glad to my last, last day,
It was death and not life that took him away.
I have been married, and I know
Just how a marriage ought to go!
REVENANTS

The old ghosts are kind ghosts
They've known me so long . . .
We've walked deep in sorrow
And we've walked high in song.

It's the little, nagging new ghosts
Running in my heart
That claw me, and hurt me,
And tear me apart.

The old ghosts lay cool hands
Upon my fevered head
But new ghosts are nettles
In a hard, hard bed.
NEW YEAR'S BELLS

The New Year's bells ring out their silver chime
their golden chime
their brass and copper chime . . .
Rolling and turning ring they their chime . . . their metal melody . . .
Safe in their tower ring they their harmony . . .
Down in the street the children of the poor stand, listening . . .
"I could make better music with a knife and fork,"
Snickers a close-eyed lad . . .
"Hush," his mother's hand on his arm stills him . . .
The flood of sound pours over him from the tall belfry
And he is drowned in hushing . . . and the sound of metal on metal . . .
Silver chime
Golden chime
Brass and copper chime
Fall round him in showers of echo
Showers of echo striking back and ringing in the air
Ringing for peace . . . for the face of a new year . . .
For the end of wars and the beginning of tillage
For planting and sowing . . .
For something in the ground to make food . . .
Somewhere something to turn at last into crumbs from the table
Crumbs from the table of life to crush into the mouths of the poor . . .
That their cries may be hushed against the sound of metal on metal . . .
Against the storm of the bells rises the hushed whisper
Strange hard whisper from Vienna . . . from Hankow . . . from Toledo
Harsh quick whisper from Berlin . . . from Petrograd . . . murmurous
from London . . .
Against the storm of the bells
Against the whirling storm of the bells...
The whisper... rises...

A child in the ragged little group huddled against the church wall
Whimpers "I’m cold... I’m cold..."
A listening man draws closer... opens his coat... folds it around the child...

Reaches into his pocket and brings out a deck of cards
Shuffles them expertly... makes a few quick passes
Before the delighted eyes of the children who crowd round him...
Deftly shows them the cards they call for...
"Queen a spades!... Jacka dimuns!... twoa clubs!"
They laugh and applaud him...
"More... do some more!"

Against the storm of the bells
The musical storm of the bells
Their shrill cries pierce to him through the tumbling echo
Of metal on metal from the rolling throats of the bells...
"Queen a clubs now... tenna spedes... fivea dimuns!"

Swiftly he handles the little packet of pasteboards
Flashes the cards one after the other before them in his deft fingers...
Thumb and little finger showing the card... palming the deck...
They laugh and crowd closer... "More... more..."
Their calls to him more silver than the bells
More golden than the bells
Fall in little brittle showers in his ears
As the child folded in his coat presses closer against his side...
And says...
"Now the Kinga hearts... now... now!"

The bells clamor louder and louder... silver... golden... brass and copper...
Brass and copper... brass and copper... metal against metal...
"The Kinga hearts... the Kinga hearts... now..."
The child's voice rises plaintively... impatiently... "Now! Now!"
Safe in their tower the bells insist on their rolling harmony...
Insist on metal against metal...
The man fingers the deck of cards... smiles down at the child...
"Get this one, buddy," he says roughly, throwing the cards high in the air...

And watching them fall in a swirling shower of black and red drops
Black... red... black... red... red drops in a black gutter...
Black drops against fallen crowns...
Against the little heap of fallen crowns...

King of Spades... fallen... gone...
Queen of Clubs... fallen... gone...
King of Diamonds... under someone's foot... fallen...
Ten of Spades... spinning and turning... gone... gone... gone...

"See 'em, buddy, see 'em?
No hearts in that deck, kid...
No Kinga Hearts... no Kinga Hearts..."
Against the storm of the bells . . .
Ringing for New Year's Day and for the start of another cycle of life . . .
Of days of living . . . and living . . . and living . . .
The child’s cry rises . . .

“But we have to have hearts . . . we have to have hearts . . .
We have to have . . .” the cry falters . . .
Stopped by the gentle hand of the man across the child’s lips . . .

Against the storm of the bells
Safe in their tower ringing their harmony
The child’s cry falters . . . dies . . .
Against the sound of metal on metal . . .
Metal in banks . . . metal in mills . . . metal in the hands of men . . .
Rolling . . . rolling . . . metal in factories . . . metal in sweatshops . . .
Metal in banks . . . rolling . . . rolling . . .
The child’s cry . . . dies . . .

“We have to have hearts . . .” a fallen echo against the mouth of the poor . . .
TO A CHILD LONG DEAD

Would that I with the young spring rain
Might fall to reach your straight white feet
There where you lie as blossoms lie

So lost . . . so sweet . . .
It may be I could learn from you
The quiet grace that holds you there
In that inviolate solitude

Past word . . . past prayer . . .
How did I mother one who lies
So stilly by the wooden wall
Nor laughs, nor sighs, nor weeps nor sings
Nor loves . . . at all . . .
SPRING SONG

Green and fresh the April leaf
Frail the young bud in its sheath
Too frail and green to launch against the year . . .
For this is April's smile . . . for this, for this her tear . . .

A star in the hand is no more than a pentagoned idea
Drawn rudely in with ten short lines . . . ten short words . . .
All that is young must ripen under some mellowing sun.

Yet still enchanted April wanders down the years
Weeping her smile . . . laughing her tears . . .
Remembering fallen flowers and leaves half-curled
Against the branch of spring
And every lovely thing
That drank her rain or shared her light
Goes wandering with her through the quiet night . . .

Frail the young bud in its sheath
Green and fresh the April leaf
Too green and fresh to launch against the year . . .
For this is April's smile . . . for this her tear . . .
APRIL BIRTHDAY

You are a blind heart's holiday . . .
Festival in the lighted street of life . . .
High carnival against the dust of incident . . .

And if the small and eager stars
The very eager and small stars
Watching enviously, slide down their laddered rays
Through the branches of trees
And drop to the ground
Running toward your music and gaiety . . .

That were enough to captivate the senses
Past the realization that the greater stars
Still hang in your skies . . .
And certain serenities can be depended upon to abide
When carnival is done
And sleepy festivity goes to bed
In the uncompromising house of daylight.

Froth far out at sea under a leaden sky
Sprayed up in the air by the shock of fathom-deep meeting
Of tides too deep for breaking over coasts of acceptance.

Dark froths immediately grey over hissing blue fire
Across the molten blue breast of the fusion of steel . . .

Froth of a whole year's undersurge
Now . . . after the dancing in the street
Now, even before the leaf . . .
Breaking out white in applebloom
Against the dark reef of its own tree’s branch . . .

These leopards leashed hard in the silver leash
Wrapped round your wrist
Rush dangerously paced with the tawny pair
That run before me
Pulling their silver rope tight
Between my hard-muscled outstretched arm
And their powerful, leaping bodies . . .

Now are we equal in the splendid race
Down the bright course of heaven . . .

Beautiful . . . beautiful . . . beautiful . . .
We rush down the fairway of planets
In the wake of the leopards . . .
Not safely standing in some chariot
With chattering boards between us and the sky . . .
But hardly pressing feet down, light-running
On the swift and fatal insecurity
The hazardous and upward rush
Of love’s wild-blowing air . . .

Light running with the small and eager stars
Into the blind heart’s holiday . . .
And on . . . and out . . . into the last high breaking
Against the reef of spring . . .
OCTOBER

Rich with a thousand fallen leaves and mossed with renascence
The deep of the forest gives breast to the youngling autumn,
Ripening him in silence, reluctantly trusting his feet
Into the ruddy play of the strong and boisterous wood-gods.
Eager with golden pride and lush for recurrent fulfillment
Thrills the earth-mother to the swift drum of his feet
Chase with the dappled fawn, his race with the southerning wing
His wild frost-cry of triumph for the first bough reddening.

Sun drunken, color-mad pagan, this, riotous striking her heart here
With young stride crisp on the paths of remembered seasons,
Fern-sweet springs and head-heavy lolling summers
And rime-spent winters. Rich with a thousand fallen days
Flushed late with desire and rosy with sylvan ritual
Purple-crowned, throbhing with beauty earth-mother lies in the bed of the year.

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ON READING CERTAIN VERY FAMOUS SONNETS

This is not love . . . this polychrome and various voice
So anxious with its tinseled rhyme
So eager to keep step . . . and walk in time
To measured pattern . . .

Love was never one
To rhyme with rose, to scan with moon, or wait
The antistrophe's diacritic gait
To pace a passion.

Love advances
Still and tide-urgent as the fathomless deep
Searching the constant shore.
The bubble-boats of rhyme
Go down to silence in its surging sweep.

Love ebbs
As stars ebb from the coasts of dawn
Silver one instant . . . then no more upon
The light.

This is not love . . . this evident and careful voice
In measured singing . . .
OF DOUBT

Who that at dawn hath seen a hill
Quiet, incomparably still,
Waiting for day... yet alight
With dreamful traces of the night
Remembering the high and fair
Pale goddess braiding silver hair
And the majestic, slow parade
The stars across the sky have made
Yet listening to the morning call
Of birds that see no stars at all
Feeling the furry running foot
Feeling the push and tug of root
Enduring the great scars where man
Tore earth to speed his caravan...

Who that hath seen this morning hill
Can doubt God turns the planet still?
THE VISIBLE STRUCTURE

Of all divinity that drops from heaven
Thrice blest is hunger and next blest is thirst.
Hunger for love and thirst for beauty leaven
The visible dream, and lay on man the first
Oracular command. See where dismissed delight
Walks the high arch of heaven with sweet wings
Grey-folded, and with footsteps pressing bright
On ever brighter stars . . . and walking . . . sings . . .

Strange sublimation this abstinence
That grants stigmata to the empty hand
Lifts love foregone to blissful eminence
Passes fulfillment . . . silences demand . . .
And frees the soul to find its heaven apart
From the encloistered longings of the heart.

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THE BLUE FLOWER

Up from the earth, the tender healing earth
Wherefrom all sweet renewals rise in time
Came forth a flower and came forth a gem
You laid them in my hands to match a rhyme...
A rhyme that was no other thing, God knows,
Than the blue flower of my love for you...
A little rhyme that holds you caught in gold
As pale gold holds this sapphire.

Now renew,
All things, oh earth, within me for this hour
This holy time of deep discovery
When all my bound heart suddenly is free
In the enchantment of a gem... a flower...
INTERUPTION

It could have been a dove . . .
Remembrance fades along the outline of a small grey bird.
It rested . . . not quiet . . . in your hand . . .
The unforgettable thing is the look in your eyes . . .
The infinitely young, old and wise
Look . . . as you realized what horizons
Those small grey wings had beaten back through skies
You saw with first discovery.

"Let us keep this beautiful bird!"

In the moment of the word
Your light grasp opened
And the flying thing was free . . .

From the edge of the field
Still faintly echoes the cry
Where the hawk . . . killed . . .
WITH ALL LOST ROSES

Descend into the silence of my heart
With all lost roses. In that quiet crypt
Guarded by all our unmourned yesterdays
In your still pride remember that their dust
Touching your garment is no more than rust
Doubting a golden woman and her ways.
And if cold agony itself has lipped
The darkling words that struck our hands apart
Let those words fail here in this holy place
Where I would shrine the beauty of your face
For love's devotions . . . as men shrine one grace
And only one . . . and where their steel must bend
Into the arc of tears and prayer.

Descend

Into the silence of my heart with all lost roses . . .