



ROBINSON JEFFERS

Early Poetry

THE FIRST THREE BOOKS, 1912–1924

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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ARCHIVAL IMAGES

A short, selective record of the books and life

Flagons and Apples

By John Robinson Jeffers



Los Angeles, U.S.A.
Grafton Publishing Company
—1912—

Title page of Flagons and Apples (1912), Jeffers's privately financed first collection.

INTRODUCTION

Life, work, and the shape of this edition

Three beginnings

The Robinson Jeffers of *Flagons and Apples* is not yet the poet most readers know. He writes songs, love poems, dramatic monologues, classical addresses, and tightly measured lyrics. Four years later, *Californians* expands into stories of farms, mountain cabins, settlers, marriages, work, and grief. Then *Tamar and Other Poems* changes the scale of everything: the line lengthens, the coast hardens, and family catastrophe is set against animals, stone, weather, and geological time. Read together, the books show that the famous Jeffers did not appear at once. He spent more than a decade trying on forms, publishing without success, and learning what kind of place and sentence could carry his imagination.

An early education in large subjects

Jeffers grew up in the household of William Hamilton Jeffers, a Presbyterian minister, theologian, and professor of Biblical history. His father taught him Greek and Latin and took the family through periods of European schooling. Scripture, Greek tragedy, classical myth, and several modern languages entered his imagination before he reached college. At Occidental, which he entered at sixteen, he published frequently in the student literary magazine. He later studied literature, medicine, and forestry without settling into a profession. Those abandoned disciplines left durable traces: the anatomist's bodily exactness, the forester's scale of land and growth, and the classicist's sense that a family story can also be a curse, a ritual, or a collision with powers larger than choice.

Robinson and Una

Jeffers met Una Call Kuster in Los Angeles in 1906, while she was married to Edward Kuster. Their long affair survived separation, public scandal, and divorce proceedings; they married in 1913. Una was not simply the subject behind early love poems. She became Jeffers's closest reader, the organizer and protector of the household, an energetic correspondent, and a strong intellectual presence in the life that made the later work possible. After the death of their infant daughter Maeve, and before the birth of their twin sons Donnan and Garth, Robinson and Una searched for a life outside the literary and social pressures of Los Angeles. Carmel gave them that life, though never the pure isolation later publicity imagined.

The first book

Published in Los Angeles in 1912 under the name John Robinson Jeffers, *Flagons and Apples* was privately financed and scarcely noticed. Its lovers, enchantresses, knights, dedications, quarrels, and songs belong to the late-Romantic and classical inheritance Jeffers had mastered early. Yet the book is more than a collection of discarded mannerisms. Sea light, cliff edges, summer heat, northward travel, and the uneasy relation between desire and judgment already press against the inherited forms. The emotional world is private, but landscape repeatedly offers a colder and more lasting measure. That tension would become central to the mature poetry.

A California book before Carmel

Macmillan published *Californians* in 1916. It is a much larger wager: extended narratives stand beside lyrics, songs, portraits, and poems of settlement, labor, mountain travel, beaches, and regional memory. The geography is chiefly Southern California—Los Angeles, San Bernardino, farms and foothills—rather than the Monterey coast. Jeffers tests how a poem can hold plot, conversation, local detail, and moral pressure over many pages. The book did not establish him nationally, but it loosened the lyric enclosure of *Flagons and Apples* and moved him toward the narrative architecture of “Tamar.” Its failures are instructive because they are failures of ambition, not of effort.

Stone, house, and coast

The family settled in Carmel in 1914 and acquired the property that became Tor House in 1919. Jeffers worked with the builder Michael Murphy and then continued in stone, raising Hawk Tower and adding walls with granite gathered nearby. Masonry was neither a quaint sideline nor proof of total solitude. It was skilled labor learned from another worker and sustained inside a family household. It also supplied a way of thinking: stones resist haste, buildings outlast moods, and human purpose must negotiate weight, fracture, weather, and time. Point Lobos, Carmel Point, the Santa Lucia range, hawks, cypress, surf, fog, and granite became active forces in the poems, not scenery laid behind human action.

The breakthrough of *Tamar*

The 1924 Peter G. Boyle edition of *Tamar and Other Poems* joined the title narrative to poems of bridges, war, beauty, fishing, suicide, house-building, Christ imagery, and the western edge of the continent. “Tamar” makes incest, possession, prophecy, and family violence inseparable from the Point Lobos landscape. The surrounding lyrics repeatedly move judgment away from human self-importance toward stone, animal life, ocean, and planetary duration. Jeffers later called this change in emphasis “inhumanism,” but the poems came before the label. Their force lies in the drama of arriving at that perspective, not in illustrating a finished doctrine.

A distinct 1924 book

The success of *Tamar and Other Poems* altered Jeffers’s career. The enlarged *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar and Other Poems* followed in 1925 and reached a much wider audience, but it was not merely another printing: it added major poems and changed the company in which the earlier sequence was read. This edition therefore stops with the Boyle book and restores its original order as a distinct breakthrough. It presents three complete historical stages—1912, 1916, and 1924—so the apprentice lyrics, the Southern California narratives, and the first mature Carmel sequence can be read without treating the later Jeffers as inevitable.

How this edition reads

This is a reset reading edition rather than a photographic facsimile. The poems retain their titles, sequence, logical verse lines, subtitles, internal divisions, and stanza breaks. Running heads, folios, scan dirt, broken type, and narrow-page continuations are removed. When a logical verse line is too long for this page, its continuation hangs inward so the line remains legible as a single unit. The archival opening is deliberately brief: one title page stands for the material record, while the rest of the volume gives the poems room to be read.

Editorial Note and Sources

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. Every poem opens on a new page. The original book sequences, titles, stanza divisions, and verse lines are retained; page furniture, scan noise, and page-induced word breaks are removed. No verse font has been reduced to force a line into the measure.

Flagons and Apples and *Californians* were read from the original scans in the poet archive using fresh page OCR, with doubtful readings checked against the images. *Tamar and Other Poems* follows the 1924 Peter G. Boyle contents and order established in the 2025 textual genealogy; its reading text is checked against the Robinson Jeffers Association's corrected public-domain text of the expanded 1925 printing.

The 1916 prose 'Note about Places' is not printed as a poem. The later additions to the 1925 collection—including "Roan Stallion" and "Apology for Bad Dreams"—fall outside this edition's stated boundary.

1. Robinson Jeffers, *Flagons and Apples*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Company, 1912.
2. Robinson Jeffers, *Californians*. New York: Macmillan, 1916.
3. Robinson Jeffers, *Tamar and Other Poems*. New York: Peter G. Boyle, 1924.
4. Robinson Jeffers Association, corrected public-domain text of *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar and Other Poems* (1925).
5. Tim Hunt, 'A Textual Genealogy of *Tamar and Other Poems*,' *Jeffers Studies* 23 (2025).
6. S. S. Alberts, *A Bibliography of the Works of Robinson Jeffers*; Robinson Jeffers Association bibliography and poem index.
7. Lawrence Clark Powell, *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and His Work* (1934), including contemporary descriptions and interview material.
8. George Sterling, *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and the Artist* (1926), an early account by a poet and friend.

BOOK I | *FLAGONS AND APPLES*

The complete first book, 1912

Her Praises

I.

When clear laughters on your lips and eyelids
Lie, like sunshine on the many-laughing,
Pale, lovely, lustrous foliage
Of an elm tree at the year's awakening—

Then with singing heart I praise your childhood
That the heavy years will pass and touch not,
That even the hoary winter's
Sleepless hate will hardly dare to handle,

Seeing he also knows you with my knowledge,
Knows you kin to all the never-aging,
Bright children of the springtime,
Kin to all young goddesses and fairies.

II.

But when laughter has forgot your forehead,
When your eyes are full of earnest shadow,
Divine and deep and tender,
Like those deep brown shadows of the forest,

Where at quiet daybreak and at twilight,
Where alone in fiery-colored noontides,
Hid under dreaming branches,
Lurks and lives the Godhead whom we worship,—
Then with quiet songs, then with the reverence
You alone deserve, I praise you, adoring
Your womanhood made perfect,
Woman that have loved and lived and suffered;

Then I praise you, worthy of adoration
More than any laughing springtime goddess,
But sister of the immortal
White supreme divinities of heaven.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Something Remembered

The shadow of an old love yesterday
Went by me on the street.—Oh, far away
And faint as thro' a veil I saw her face
Shorn of the old miracle that gave it grace.
Charm it had still, and surely fair enough
To be well worthy of a greater love,
But how were fled, never to come again,
The old longing, the old pleading, the old dear pain!

Ah, dearest, it was pitiful! In truth
I almost could have wept my wasted youth,
The vacant sequence, year succeeding year,
Equally void, until I met you, dear,
To whom these elder loves are candles burning
Ere dawn, to wane in the keen glow of morning,
Or like unworthy sacrifices vowed
Before the Goddess beckons from her cloud.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

To Helen About Her Hair

Your hair is long and wonderful;
It is dark, with golden
Lights in the length of it.

Long, lovely, liquid, glorious,
Is your hair, and lustrous,
Scented with summertime.

Beware when you are combing it,
In the nights and mornings,
Shaking its splendor out.

I bid you comb it carefully,
For my soul is caught there,
Wound in the web of it.

Publication. *Flavons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

The Cruelty of Love

Sweetheart, at night when you sit in your quiet chamber,
Leaning your soul on the bar that divides us twain,
Remembering things too sad, too sweet to remember,
The infinite pain of love and the joy of the pain,

Star of my night, doubt not that I am glad,
Yea glad tho' it hurt you and wring the heart in your body;
Glad, tho' the loves and the kisses we two have had
Sting you as serpents at night, biting you bloody,

Because you forget not me, my desire, my delight,
Forget not me, who cry as a child unweaned,
Wandering by desolate beaches in the night,
Thinking of you, pouring my soul on the wind.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Nemesis

So beautiful you are, so very beautiful, love,
I tremble and am sad, touching you, or looking at your face,
Lest evil come of your great wonderful beauty, and of
God's envy, and my surpassing happiness.

For truly are we not told in the old true tales of the past
Of one who saw beauty, and felt no sorrow, but joy alone,

And how all Gods united together until at last
Both he and beauty were wretchedly overthrown?
For joy is the foam of a wave that breaks on the world's low shore:
Dear and desired is that foam, but around it and underneath
What ghastly gulfs abysmal, that blacken forever- I more more
With death and despair and the terror of monstrous teeth!

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

The Quarrel

I think there was never a lover
More even tempered than I,
Till last night, when my anger boiled over—
And you have forgotten why!

Doubtless; but I, being human,
Cannot so soon forget,
O dear and bittersweet woman,
Your words that torment me yet.
When I left you I wandered at will
Where our modern city has a
 Slight air of antiquity still—
Down by the Mexican Plaza.

And the bell of Our Lady with no low
Tones, but with confident voice,
Struck ten, and a drunken cholo
Was calling the girl of his choice.
“Carajo,” he cursed her, with other
Words to be spoken less lightly,
Discussing her morals and mother
More fluently than politely.

And I thought, as I heard his solo,
“How simple were life—how human—
If I were a drunken cholo,
And you my dark-skinned woman!”

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

And Afterward

Because of a dream by the seashore
I am not much joyful any more.

A little dream for a little while—
How bitterly God must smile!

It was all about your hair and your head—
But truly the dream is dead.

It was all about your throat and your eyes:
It is strange how a dream dies.
It was sweet as your throat for a little while:
Now it is bitter as God's smile.

My heart is somewhat sad in me
Because of a little dream by the sea.

Publication. *Flavons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Ebb-Tide

Once, you know, we walked together
At the edge of the ebb on the warm, wet sand;
You said it was charming misty weather,
And a little loosely I held your hand.

A delicate odor, not scented—hinted—
Told of sea-slime and slow decay;
The beach was very prettily tinted
With mother-o'-pearl and pearly gray.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

At the Last

Helen, that evening by the autumn sea
Love touched its zenith and its destiny,
And—had we known!—had little more to give.
That is the time we should have ceased to live.
Or else, if dying were impossible,
I might have bidden you one last farewell
In one last living kiss, and gone away.

There is small beauty in a love's decay,
When the flowers fade, and the dear perfumes fail,
And other odors less desirable
Breed in the withering leaves and rotting stems.

Dear, had we only known the envious claims
Immedicable and sure and pitiless
Of time and fate and the final weariness!

But now it is too late; we have let love meet
Slow death, and hugged the unburied corpse of it,
And mixed our tears over the bloodless head,
Because we did not know that love was dead.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

A Philosophy

Light loves are better: I who have loved too much,
Too often, have had joy of only such.
It is beautiful to love a little while
A little, and to sever with a smile,
And incense of a not too mournful sigh,
And gracious gestures of a glad good-bye.

That is the lover's right philosophy.

But you, to whatsoever deity
You worship, pray to be delivered of
These painful passions of too great a love.
There is no joy in such a love as this,
Whose jealousy is bitter in the kiss,
And whose too arduous ardors burn like fire.

There is no beauty in so fierce desire;
But moan and madness, but mistrust and tears.

No love is stronger than the strangling years;
And is it not better for a love to cease—
Since cease it must—with smiles, soft sighs, and peace,
Than that the lovers, love being overpast,
Should turn and tear each other at the last?

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Last Spring

The little lambs were tottering
On legs unsteady
Over clear bluegrass wet with spring—
What glad, mad fools we are in spring!

And you and I were promising
A love forever,
Clear, sure and lovely as the spring—
Such glad, mad fools we are in spring!

Publication. *Flavons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

The Longing

I have no peace now this long while,
Since your too well remembered smile,
The crimson parting of your lips
Haunts me and maddens me, and steep
My soul in that immense unrest
Which is of woes the bitterest.

I could endure when you are gone
To let my memory linger on
The dusky splendor of your hair,
A perfumed twilight; I could bear
To think about the starry blue
That makes the glorious eyes of you;
I even could endure, perhaps,
To dream about the passionate lapse
Of those pale eyelids violet veined
Together, when the spirit is pained
With the intolerable loveliness
That lurks below your eyelashes;—
But this is too much suffering.
Now you are gone from me, this thing
That I have ever in my head,
The little curving flower of red,
The fairy trick I have always loved
Of your half-laughing lips, which moved
After a kiss, when like a child
You looked into my eyes and smiled.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Penitent

I, that am worthless of your love,
Have such forlorn desire thereof

As renders me almost again

Worthy.—Ah, by the bitter pain
That makes me humble, who was not
So humble once—ah; by the hot

Eternal torment of desire
And suffering of a soul on fire—
Goddess, more gracious and more fair

Than any earthborn women are—
Goddess, forgive me if you can!
I am no God—I am a man.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

On the Cliff

Do you remember, dear, that little house
Built hard against the high cliff's ragged brows
Over the emerald ocean's level floor
Where we were sitting, while the quick day wore
To sunset? Ah, how swiftly the day passed,
Our day, our one sweet day that would not last,
Altho' we did not see the sun go down,
Nor knew till darkness that the sun was gone,
Because our eyes were blind, while my lips drank
Oblivious love at yours.

But the sun sank;

Nor all our urgent wishing had the power
To lengthen out our-day by one poor hour.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Northward Bound

“Will you come back to me?”

The lighted windows of the flaring train
Moved, passed, and all my love and all my pain
Grew to an immortal instant agony.

“Will you come back to me?”

In that last kiss I gave her all my soul,
My being and my breathing and the whole
Of what I am and what I am to be.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

The Lost Knight

I am grown weary of this land
Where no wind ever stirs the mist;
For they have laid a spell on me
So that the sword within my hand
Is bent, and nerveless is my wrist,
Feeble my back, feeble my knee.

If there were any one to fight
Perhaps I might be well again.
But no one ever comes at all.
And rusty in the waning light
Hangs the great spear; in silent pain
Hangs the great trumpet on the wall.
Of old I made free sport, and drank
Among my fellows, and found sweet
Red feasts, and the red swords that ring
When men close fighting, rank to rank.
Now I can neither drink nor eat
For thinking of the songs they sing.

O women, will you never cease
Weaving your spells and plotting how
To fold me in a vile content,
And lap me in an evil peace?
I cannot give you pleasure now,
Who am songless now, and impotent.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

From Fenestrella's

I was but a drunken poet,
She a Fenéstrella waitress;
But one month I loved her truly,
She, one month, was not a traitress.
In the evenings in the garden
How we kissed behind the lilacs!
While the scent of wine was mingled
With the perfume of the smilax.
King nor queen had e'er such pleasure
Out of love—the high Gods know it!
She was just a pretty waitress,
I a mad and drunken poet.

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

End of Summer

Let us give thanks to God, my lady,
If any God at all there be,
That the time coming finds us ready
To sever without agony.
Too wise for pain, but not for pleasure,
We have had our pleasure, and are done.
The lovely summer season's leisure
Passes, and the great world goes on.
We have had the honey, and are sated,
Stingless. We have enjoyed, my dear,
A reasonable, regulated,
And well-conducted love affair.

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

At Playa Hermosa

Grief that takes men by the throat,
Faltering joy that falters not
At the illimitable extreme
Summit of the imperious dream,—
What have these to do with me
In my quiet by the sea?
Here is not despair nor hope:
Only gray waves rise and drop.
Here against the level tides
Strange and ominous peace abides.—
What will Fate exact of me
For this quiet by the sea?

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Noon

Hot waves of the ancient waters drone
Against the shore ancestral hate.
Their dull, relentless monotone
Is as the very voice of Fate.
What madness kindles in my head,
What God lays violent hands on me,
That the high sun is perfect dread,
And perfect terror the flat sea?
The blazing noon is like a load
Insufferable, too hard to bear.
O wild and cruel and occult God,
Have mercy on thy worshipper!

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

To Aileen-of-the-Woods

Loveliest, there lie inside your eyes

Marvels of ever new surprise;
Ah, in the dear clear depths of them

What bright transparencies of flame!
What coolness of fresh-growing trees!
What freedoms of the unmastered breeze!
Your eyes are springs of those old dreams
You gave me once by woodland streams.
When all the livelong summer day

Near a clear waterfall we lay,
And knew, each in the other's heart,
That dear, strange love that was a part
Of what strange mountain solitudes,
What clean, wild passions of the woods!

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Nyssa

You that tread the sacred grove,
I am Nyssa, and I love.
Yellow is your hair, and mine
Dark and purple like old wine,
And a perfume is in it
Sweeter than the wine's—grown sweet
With the wealth of ancient suns
Long forgot, but living once.

I am Nyssa of the grove.
Kings have loved me: can you love?
Heroes left their antique feast
For the heaven of my breast;
Monarchs begged no more than this,
To give kingdoms for my kiss;
Priests, unasked and eagerly,
Left their holiest Gods for me.

Youth, fear not the sacred grove.
I am Nyssa, and I love.
Many a lord and warrior
Have you for their inheritor,
Only, being dead, they have
Nothing but a meagre grave.
None was like them in their day:
You that live are more than they.
Men are gone like idle breath:

I know neither age nor death,
Young and strong and unsubdued
By continual widowhood.

Yet I know that this is truth:
Youth is ever fain of youth.
Let the fathers die, so be
They but leave their sons to me.

I am young: shall I be fed
Pallid memories of the dead?
Nay, their glory goes with them:
Will white ashes serve for flame?
You have youth and you have heat,
And your eye has life in it:
Are you not more good to kiss
Than a buried emperor is?

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

To Canidia

Nay, is there need of witchcraft still,
Witch-girl, to break my stronger will?
Of strange enchantments, and of song
In far pine-forests all night long?
What use is there of woven charms?
Have I not held you in my arms?
And is there stronger spell than this,
The burning memory of your kiss?
Or mightier charm can you prepare
Than the long wonder of your hair?

But tho' the madness of desire
Burn body and spirit as with fire,
Tho' the wild longing never cease
To seek out you and find out peace,
I, being more strong than you, no more
Will set my feet to seek your door.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

For Helen Whose Remembrance Leaves No Peace

TO HELEN, WHOSE REMEMBRANCE LEAVES

NO PEACE

Dystenos egkeimai potho.

A great Greek dictionary helped me not,
Nor keen desire of beauty, when I sought
To untangle those few fragments left to us—
Too few!—of passion-stormy Archilochus.
For word by word I made some verses mine
Until—unhappy—I chanced upon this line:
I, wretched, am enwrapped in long desire,
Soulless—What more I know not. The dead fire
Blazed up again—and all my thought was you;

And all the old deadly pain began anew.
Will the old same pain forever trouble us:
With the old fierce fire that burned Archilochus?

Even so; and hopelessly. Nor I complain
That mortals must endure the mortal pain.
Yet—lost and dear!—it is not much I seek:
Will you not even let me study Greek?

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Madrigal to Helen

The stars are growing somewhat faint,
And very far and very high;
Westward the gray waves change their cry
To a more passionate complaint.
A little wind begins to cry;
And eastward on the hill stand bent
And crooked trees, in dumb complaint,
In silhouette against the sky.
Dim rose is back of them, and faint,
Flat lines of cloud; and then the blue—
With every dawn I think of you,
With little joy and long lament.

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Morgengabe

The sunset put the sky afire
And made the ocean marvelous;
But fiercer was the fire in us,
The fire of our desire.

The sunset put the heavens ablaze,
And made the vague waves break in fire,
When your desire and my desire
Met after many days.

The blood-red sunset burned above,
And all the sea beneath was red;
My hand was hot behind your head,
And mine was all your love.

O dear, dark eyes, that far outstarred
The shining sentinels of night!
You shone, and only were my light
In the bright darkness afterward.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

The Night

You sleep; but I am left awake
And watch against the dews of dawn.
O night, move gently for her sake!
O stars, draw softly on
Against the dawn!

I smiled and left you; not with hope
But as one hopeless smiles and lies.
But half my heart is broken up
Because of her who lies
With tired eyes.

How could I leave you with a jest?
How could you sleep, I leaving so?
Whether to love was best, or best
To sleep, or best to go.
We do not know.

There is no God will tell us now
If I did wrong, if I did right.
All the ancient Gods have studied how
To make wrong mix with right,
Day mix with night.
If I could sleep at all, I would.
It may be you are not asleep...
You said the high Gods wish us good:
But I—I think they keep
Our eyes—to weep.
The great wind gathering, strains and sings
And stretches seaward. But I would
Our love were bound between his wings,
A holy and dolorous load
Of evil and good.

I would our love were fastened there:
So the gray wind should bear its fire
Across that great bare waste to where
Even the sea-winds tire
Of their desire.

For things come back to trouble us yet
Not thence, where drowned and dead things are.
Would the sea-rollers swallow it?
Would it shine forth afar
A purer star?

Publication. *Flavons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

And the Stars

Perhaps you did not know how bright last night,
Especially above your seaside door,
Was all the marvelous starlit sky, and wore
White harmonies of very shining light.
Perhaps you did not want to seek the sight
Of that remembered rapture any more.—
But then at least you must have heard the shore
Roar with reverberant voices thro' the night.
Those stars were lit with longing of my own,
And the ocean's moan was full of my own pain.
Yet doubtless it was well for both of us
You did not come, but left me there alone.
I hardly ought to see you much again;
And stars, we know, are often dangerous.

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Salt Sand

We sat on the dim sea sand
At the quiet birth of night;
Your fingers over my hand
Lay still and white.
Slowly darkened the sea
Under the starless skies;
In the darkness beckoned me
Your luminous eyes.
And yet, it was not my fault,
Nor yours; you wept on the morrow.
Can the sea be empty of salt,
Or love of sorrow?

Publication. *Flagons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

On the Lake

O weary firs along the shores,
Why is your speech so sorrowful?
O water voices sad and dull,
What pain is yours?
I grieve, and you should bring me cheer,
Not mix strange sorrow with my own.
Or do you also long for one
Far, far from here?

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Another Saul

If I had you to sing for me
Those songs I cannot put from mind,
My spirit, that grows sick and blind,
Being well, would see.
I walk in a most weary path,
And drink at very bitter wells;
God mocks me in his mirth, or else
Perhaps in wrath.
God's voice was never clear, but O
Sweetheart, sweetheart, your voice was clear!
So pure, so clear, so near, so dear,
So long ago.

Publication. *Flacons and Apples* (Grafton Publishing Company, 1912), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, while narrow-page continuations, running heads, and folios are removed.

Launcelot to Guinevere

The crowded stars are wild and bright,
But all their soul is lost;
The moon, forgetting not her light,
Is grown into a ghost.
O bitter and lamenting sea,
Your lonely voices know
If all these things were thus with me
Not many days ago.

When she was here who is departed
Your voices did not sigh;
Nor the angel moon go broken-hearted
Across the sterile sky.

II.

The wind that swept all night thro' sheets of rain,
Shouting in darkness, dies at last with dawn;
And the mad thoughts and the mad passion of pain
That all night vexed me, are gone.
A little while at least... are gone.
These also gone? Will nothing stay?
Nothing, I think, since you are gone away.
It may be even our hopeless love some day
Will also unwrap its wings and go away.
Indeed, I have often heard them say
Love also unwraps its wings and goes away.

III.

(From Mt. San Luis)
In that white quiet of the moon
I almost put away
The bitter thoughts and the long dreams
That vex the day.
Forget I could not. But the moon
Brought me a little hope;
While the white clouds climbed slowly
Up the white slope.

But everything seemed long ago;
And hope too died at last;
And in a moonwhite world the trees
Black shadows cast.

And in a moonwhite world the trees
Whispered, as friend to friend,
Windless, and the white mists were moved
Without a wind.
The wide peace and the windless pines
Were more than I could bear.
My thoughts were broken-winged birds
In that still air.

I made a great fire in the house
To fit my brain's fire;
And over the red embers mourned
For a vain desire.

Was not moonlight in windless hills
A month ago?—But you
Were with me in the windless hills
A month ago.

IV.

Drunken with love and sorrow,
I am grown deaf and blind:
I can only see the sky,
And hear the wind.

The wind is a noise like thunder,
The sky is a blaze like light;
Let us hope that peace after while
Will come with night.
But though blind and deaf and broken,
I see and hear you yet;
You, and your tears, and your voice,
When last we met.

V.

When last we met!—how often I
And often we used to meet!
But God has trampled it all
Under his feet.

God must be satisfied surely,
However much we have sinned,
With your sorrow and mine
And the wail of the wind—

God who has seen your beauty
Shine as the great stars shine,
And your hand like a stricken bird
Drop out of mine.

VI.

I would I might walk in the twilight
Somewhere at the world's end,
And speak with Death for a little
As friend with friend.

I would tell him all our sorrow,
I would tell him straight and true;

Perhaps for my life he would give me
A year of you.

Perhaps we could strike a bargain:
Perhaps he would not say
That I am too hopeless, and you
Too far away.

VII.

The sun is golden on the hills
Where all night silver shone the moon;
The merry skylark thrills and fills
The valley with his waking-tune.

Look up, my lady, to the sky
And take delight of the merry May;
For you and I and you and I,
We have been dead a year today.

VIII.

I grieve, now love is so long gone,
Not that my sorrow will not cease,
But that my heart is so at peace,
So passionless and so alone.
For while I suffered, then I knew
Life was still in me. Now I sit
Unpained, and have as little wit
As any stone the quiet dew
Drips over every night, or as
Some corpse the old world remembers not,
Stuck six feet down to smother and rot
Under scant growth of sickly grass.

No dreams disturb that fleshless brow,
Happier than mine, who yet must mourn
Not that my love is all forlorn
But that I care for nothing now.

IX.

But I at least will take a horse,
And take a flask of wine with me,
And find a way across the hills,
However many hills there be.

And I will 'light at many an inn
And stop at many a tavern door,
And ask the path of pleasure—but
The way of happiness no more.
And drunken I will ride and sing,
And drunken think not of the past.
My heart that died a year ago,
Says, One can always die at last.

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Epilogue

I have known as a boy may, sorrow and love,
Lust and thirst, desire and despair;
But the thoughts that I wove my verses of
(I beg you to notice) are not the same
As the thoughts I have lived for myself; but came
From the flame on the hearth, and the lightning flame,
And the sea, and the sun, and the summer air.

For our country here at the west of things
Is pregnant of dreams; and west of the west
I have lived; where the last low land outflings
Its yellow-white sand to the edge of the bay;
And the west wind over us every day
Blows, and throws with the landward spray
Dreams on our minds, and a dreamy unrest.

The westward sea and the warm west wind—
It was these, not I, that wrought my rhyme.
I, that have lived, and sorrowed, and sinned,
Have spoken no word of my life as it is;
Have spoken only the ocean's abyss,
Only the open waves, that kiss,
And climb on the cliff, and fall, and climb.
Let them climb, and fall, and climb, as they will;
It is one to me, who have made what I might
Of long loves gone wrong, and light loves gone ill,
And loves of fools, forlorn and forgot,
And loves of men that witches have caught,
And loves enough, God wot; but not
The loves I have lived, nor the life I could write.

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BOOK 2 | *CALIFORNIANS*

The complete second book, 1916

Invocation

O EVENING star deep in the deep west burning,
Far over the faint line of flickering foam;
A solitary star, and unreturning

But with return of night: thy sisters come
Laughing out of the east, but thou declinest;
Day wanes no faster than thou fliest home;

Thou wilt not, though in heaven, O divinest,
Endure divided glory, nor too near
Approach, nor multitude. Alone thou shinest.

Thou hast precedence in heaven: have it here
In song, and in my heart that yearns afar
Above the wave-tops toward thy splendor clear,
Lamp of the west, O loveliest wandering-star!
And thinks how oft at closing in of days
Nameless, and evening respites of dim war,

My fathers looked from unremembered ways
Up to thy guiding light; and swore at dawn
To turn their shoulders downward, and still gaze

The whole day toward thy setting; and were drawn
Out of huge Asia, past the Euxine Sea,
Northward of cloudy Caucasus, and on

Westward, free wanderers. They would look for thee
At fire-lighting each night; but when thy face.
Was hidden, there they halted, eagerly

Awaiting thy new birth, and in that place
Built huts and plowed the field. Thy light renewed,
They rose, and tracked westward the wilderness.

Now I, the latest, in this solitude
Invoke thee from the verge extreme, and shoal
Of sand that ends the west. O long-pursued,
Where wilt thou lead us now? What greater goal
Gleams for our longing down the abysm of time?
What weariness of body and worn soul?
What farther west? What wanderings more sub-lime?

Publication. *Californians* (Macmillan, 1916), original scan.

Provenance. Fresh OCR checked against the page image; stanza spacing is taken from the printed page, narrow-page continuations are rejoined, and the prose ‘Note about Places’ is documented but not treated as a poem.

Stephen Brown

— In the San Bernardino Mountains,
Traveling from sky-peaked Grayback to Bear Lake,
In a deep-shaded dell I saw great fountains
Of shining water from the black earth break,
And pour through heavy-fronded ferns below,
And down the dark ravine a turbulence make
As of immortal footsteps, when they go
Assured and at their will the wide world to and fro.

Beyond, I met a lone old man, who walked
My way; and he was merry as a bird
In the familiar forest, yet he talked
But little; at long intervals a word
Laughed on his lips to show his inward joys.
As for my answers, they were never heard;
The old man was deaf to every earthly noise;
Yet often smiled as if he heard some spiritual voice.
He was but five feet tall; and like an elf
Quick-footed; and a thin gray beard he had.
He spoke of woods and mountains and himself
As if they were old friends, and deeply glad
All of the others' company. "But come
Up to my house and share my food," he said.
"There's plenty in store: for each of us a crumb."
Then asked me whither I went, and where I had journeyed from.

I answered, though he heard not; and we came
To his log-cabin, all of unbarked wood.
Upon a sideling hill, clipped in a frame
Of huge dark pines, and well-withdrawn it stood,
Two hundred paces from the lonely trail.
Close by, a trickle of dancing water flowed,
And, through a hollowed sapling's trough, some fell
As from a spout, and tinkled in a wooden pail.

The old man walked proudly ahead; and, I could see,
Glad to be gracious, for his guests were rare.
All that his larder served, he speedily
Displayed upon the table white and bare.
And, after luncheon ended, he talked more
Than while we walked. "There's youth in moun-tain air,"
He said; "you wouldn't guess I'm seventy-four?
And younger now, I think, than ever I was before."

He had lived thirty years in this one spot,
High in the lonely mountains:— here he leaped
Out of his chair, and from a closet brought
A treasured document, a column clipped
From a newspaper of the valley town.
"Read this," he said, and with one finger flipped
The folded print. I read how Stephen Brown,
Seventy-three years old, had lately travelled down

From (said the newspaper) his hermitage,
Thirty miles in a day, through snow waist-deep,—
A journey few strong men of half his age
Would dare— to visit valley friends, and keep
The Christmas with them.— While I read, the old man
Laughed boylike; when I looked at him, a deep
Quick flood of red across his pale cheek ran;
And troubled like a boy, and blushing, he began:
"There's one man lives at Bear Lake Dam, and one
At Mountain Lodge: three of us altogether
Winter up here. When snow flies, you stay on
Till the March thaw, and watch the wild white weather
Fill up the windows:— but, last year, I meant
To see my friends." He paused; I knew not whether
To wonder more that he the long descent
Had dared, or that his other winters here were spent.
I took a card and wrote: "It's ten hard miles
To Bear Lake Dam; to Mountain Lodge eighteen.
— If you should fall ill? '— " Why," the old man smiles,
"I'd be no worse off then than I have been.
I was consumptive, I came west, you'd say,
With death holding my hand. So dry and lean,
If I'd gone barefoot I'd have blown away.

They gave me six months' life, but not another day.

"I'd always loved the trees; and half a year
Was half a year; and it was springtime then.
I'd always loved the mountains; I came here,
But soon, instead of dying, I lived again.
I like my hill, though it is far removed
From the sweet looks and kindly help of men."
— The old man spoke now as if in words approved
By lingering thought: "We grow to be what we have loved."

Now when I went my way I wondered still
What he had meant in saying, "We grow to be
What we have loved." Was it, that in the hill
Buried, he would grow into earth and tree,
And briar and fern? Or did he rather mean
That, by such love uplifted and made free
From common fears, he had become serene
As Nature's darling children evermore have been?

The mighty peaks that bathe in viewless air,
The pines that murmur by the mountain streams,
What thoughts have they? We know they do not share
Our passions, the disturbance of our dreams.
But as I looked about me, treading slowly
The canyon trail, the curtain of what seems
Was lifted, and my heart grew glad and lowly:
"O happy earth," I cried, "'O fearless, O most holy!"
Then I remembered with no change of mood
That aged man whose wisdom was serene.
— He stands now in my memory, as he stood
Upon his cabin threshold, and between
The door-posts of rough pine, to say good-by.
A little man, scant-bearded, old and lean;
A man at home in the world to live or die,
Self-stationed, self-upheld as the all-beholding sky.

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Emilia

Tue old heart of the world is changed not with its dress.

Give thanks to God; and presently read on.

— High on a lovely hill, which cypresses

And somber eucalypts had overgrown;

And eastward from its height Los Angeles,

Or rather of her lights the untimely dawn,

Was seen at nightfall; but the daytime breeze

Brought ever the sharp breath of western seas;

- And at the hill's foot, thrusting forth her piers

Like water-roots, Redondo not content

Numbers her shipping; and beyond appears

The inviolable eternal element,

Lapped in that azure mantle which it wears

Unfaded from the morn of time; and bent

Perfectly like a crescent, the bay reaches

South, and far north, on foam-wet glistening beaches:—

High on this far-viewed hill, and over-spired

By cypresses, and locked with tangled boughs

Of live-oaks and the eucalypts; retired

Into a sober distance which allows

But murmurs, as of insects evening-choired,

From shore and harbor, stood her father's house.

White-fronted and flat-roofed it was, with small

Grilled balconies before the windows tall.

It looked straight westward; when the sun declining

Stood flushed above the far verge of the seas

In a sky of amber and rose, his level shining

Cast the slim shadows of the cypress trees

Like ribbons up the wall, with darkness lining

The deep-set casements and the balconies;

While gleamed with sunset colors glorious

The window-panes, as fire were in the house.

II

Low down against the wall, yet vinelike too,
With sudden upward reaches as of flame,
Rich and full-flowered with yellow and orange, grew
Streptoslen bushes, and their blossoms came
Up to the window-ledges, clinging to
The rough and cream-white plaster; and these same
Climbed the broad door-posts of the central door
On trellises unseen, and arched it o'er.

Beyond the driveway wall and hedge of privet
Tall dahlias answered the streptoslen bushes
In color:— as the liquor of high Glenlivet
Finds new youth in a worn man's veins, and flushes
His overshadowed cheek— or brandy'll give it
The same ambrosial ardor: so these gushes
Of lively color lit the house and park,
Which cypresses and blue-gums made so dark.

But there was fragrance too, that quietly crept
Across the narrow paths, among the stems
Spiring or gnarled of tufted trees, and swept
The lawns, with trailing as of silken hems
And whispering; or at windless nightfall slept
Against the doorstep. Like a miser's gems
Were hid the little gardens whence flew forth
Such deep sweet breathings of the tranquil earth.
Scarcely the gardener, old John Williamson,
Though his pipe drew well of a morning, and the gout
Forgot to twist his knuckles, could have known
Where were the little plots, nor found them out
For tending; gentle Emilia, she alone
Had planted them, and knew the paths about
Their secrecies, and came in summer eves
With water; and she loved their least of leaves.

Her gardens— how should any but herself
Number? or know the blossoms growing there?
Her pansies, each the quaint face of an elf
Lifting from shadow, whispering to faint air
Their faintest odor— on a sunny shelf
Of earth a live-oak's knotted knees upbear

Her gay verbenas, half ashamed to fret
With color-wealth pale-wanded mignonette,
That grew near by— her violets under a ledge
Where the hill cropped out with rock and downward slanted
Into rich crevices— and in the hedge
Her sweet-briar roses carefully transplanted:—
Sweet-william too she kept, that used to pledge
The breeze from cups of spice— her plots not wanted
Snowfall of sweet alyssum,— and had scope
For phlox and basil and dwarf heliotrope.

II

Like a young Goddess who with love requites
And nurture, the swung censers and sweet vows
Of worshippers and priests and acolytes,
She passed at twilight from the garrulous house
(Now that the yearning veiled autumnal nights
Set early in) and under obscure boughs
Swift darkness felt her all alone, not lonely,
Finding her charges by their fragrance only.

Autumn is not the rich and mournful close,
With us who dwell against the sunsetting,
Of the year, ere winter and the cerecloth snows
Enwind him, a pale slumberer until spring:
Here autumn is a traveller's brief repose
At heat of noon; he sleeps not; he will fling
The vine-leaves in a moment from his brow,
And run, refreshed with wine— for even now,

This side the nearest milestone, companied
By laughing shepherd Fauns who pipe the flocks
To fruitfulness, by wanton girls dove-eyed,
By that old kindly Satyr who still mocks
And loves too,— cometh she, the longed-for bride,
Even she above whose dark wet shining locks:
Burns like a star the whole year's desire, even Spring,
Veiled in soft rain,— with joy, with blossoming.

This night it seemed to Emilia she was here:
Already, though October had not rounded
His brother's late-born crescent, that swam clear
Of cloud in middle heaven; but clouds abounded
On all the wide circumference; nor could peer
More than four stars or five, and these confounded
Dizzily by the moon-rays that outmeasure
Her islanded estate of straitened azure.

"The night is warm, the rain will come to-night.
There is no wind but many clouds; all day
The sun threw doubtful beams, and milky white
-Through mist on the blue bosom of the bay;
No dew is fallen at all; the air is light;
The ocean's tones are clear but far away.
O come, rain, come, sweet rain, fall softly and bring
To me and to my little flowers the spring!

"The hill-slopes are all gray and wait for you
To weave them lustrous robes of living green.
The trees grow faint with drinking the thin dew;
'Leaves wrinkle, meagre limbs are bare between.
The sky is tired of being always blue.
The ways are deep with dust: O wash them clean!
And all my blossoms though well tended cry
Wistfully for the waters of the sky!"
Thus prayed Emilia, not with open lips,
But longingly at heart. For she was one
Who held to the ancient first apocalypse:
As the pure sons and daughters of the dawn
Prayed nor to images, nor fellowships
Of Godheads on a mountain, nor withdrawn
In heaven one God nor three; but worshipped rather
Kindlier powers,— the sun, their lofty father; -
Deep-bosomed earth, their mother; and the wind,
The rain, the sheltering hills, the moving sea:
Even so Emilia, not with conscious mind,
I think, but by deep nature, reverently
Regarded the great elements, inclined
Her heart before the first— and verily
The only visible— Gods;— and found her prayer

As often answered as most others are.

But the fifth night it was. From set of sun;
The gentle night was three hours old; the hearth
Nourished a blaze— no winter-crackling one—
Emilia's dear two sisters with their mirth
Were noisier. She, her evening tendance done,
And loved communion with the pensive earth,
Was joined with them. The sudden heavenly gift
Upon the window panes a-pattering swift

Resounded: then the first-born of the three
Who sat within, laughed suddenly and said,
“At least to-night the boy won't visit me—
Francis, I mean: there's nothing stirs his dread
Like driving on wet roads, since the evening he
Skidded and toppled over. Now, instead.
Of sitting two and two, for once we'll spend '
The evening like three sisters— with no friend.

“Are you not glad, Emilia?” But that third
While Flavia spoke had vanished from the room.
“Where is the girl?— Where is she going?”— They heard
Down the long panelled hall the house-door boom,
Closing. They ran and opened: soft rain purred
On all the leaves without; through murmurous gloom
Faint perfume of untimely blossoms crept;
And in a haze of rain the garden slept.

They called; and when she answered not, returned
Wondering to the hearthside. In the night
Beneath the trees Emilia walked, and yearned
As solemnly as ever anchorite
To his high phantom-God: but she discerned
The God of her desire— for silvery-white,
Beating the long clear grass like one who danced,
Bacchanalian, silver-footed, gleamed and glanced

In the slant window-glimmer the sweet rain,
And hissed among the leaves, and pattered on
The ghostly gravel walks; and like a stain
Across the radiance of the moon was drawn

In luminous clouds; and failed; and fell again,
Wetting the tall-stemmed dahlias autumn-wan;
And from the eave-troughs with a gurgling sound
Gushed; and was sucked in by the thirsty ground.
What ails the maiden thus to walk afield
In the wet cold uncomfortable dark?
The field-squirrel now is in his cave concealed,
Even in its driest depth; the meadowlark
Hugs what small cover a few wild mustards yield;
The fat wood-grub has burrowed under bark;
The slug finds shelter under a wet stone:
Why walks Emilia roofless, she alone?
Because she loves— because she worships— yea,
What can the maiden do and how express
More wholly her devotion? All astray
She casts her streaming hair; she will not less
Than give in gratitude her soul away
Unto the cool kind torrents: now her dress
Is loosened at the throat, and on her breast
Numberless silver kisses are impressed.
Now slip her garments backward— who can watch
In the wet night, and she well hidden behind
Her friendly trees?— she loosens the gold catch
Of the pin at her bosom; and the blind
Quick fingers of the raindrops, from the thatch
Of upper leaves wind-shaken, soon can find
And play upon her shoulders glistening bare
Between the mingled strands of her dark hair.

No eye is under all the darksome trees;
No step to frighten virgin modesty;
The world is housed: now, if the maiden please,
May she not walk and play conformably
To her desire and beauty? Piece by piece
Her raiment slips from off her, and with glee,
Naked she stands, and free and without stain,
Mixing her tender body with the rain.

Anon she dances.— Thus a young doe-fawn,
One that has never known the stag, nor stood
Beneath his weight of love, about moon-dawn
Leaps in a lonely clearing of the wood
For love of her own lightness; far withdrawn
She dances in the mountain solitude;
Yet, should but a bird cry, how far she flees
Into the darkness of the taller trees!

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The Vardens

In spring, when the young grass and wildflowers clothe
With color their clear forms, the yucca stands
In the wet world unflowering, a grim nest.
Of spear-points from one center radiated,
Hateful to travellers. But when summer's glow
Has bared of their ephemeral bravery
The high forestless mountains burning in the south;
When only in cool of deep ravines is left
A little water, and green leaves beside it:
Then is the yuccas' flowering-time; they shoot.
Heavenward the towering columns of their joy,
With whitest petals flaked;— from far they seem
Tall and clear candles on the mountain's flanks,
Toward the far peak advancing.

Thus may love
Withhold itself too long, and blossom at last
Hopeless, untimely; as that nest of thorns
In the arid season after spring is dead.
But Richard Varden from the first was froward,
Unmanageable; and all the more, because
“Of that half perfect brother; and the pale
Faint-smiling beauty of his sister, doomed
To illness all her days. His cheek was bright
And sanguine through the sunburn; his gray eyes
Were wild and liberal as an ocean-wave;
Yet often rested on some weed of the earth
In sudden contemplation tenderly.
He in his fifteenth year forsook the house
That bred him up to boyhood; a brief quarrel
Concerning girls he walked with, and sweet wine
Illicit he had drunk, made wide the gulf
And separate the destinies. At dawn
The house awoke and Richard was not there;
Nor in the almond orchard was he found,
That reached up to the hill; nor where the olives
Drowsed with gray leaves under the morning heat;
Nor in the vineyard of the broad-leaved vines
Grown autumn-heavy. He had chosen a way

Far off; and Graham his brother, riding out
On the roan mare, had word of him last seen
Passing afoot the Santa Ynez wash
A long day's toil northwestward. Who returned
With no more tidings. Then the mother cried,
"O my poor boy! He has left us; and I know him,
He never will come back." But he that ruled
The house and farm, said gravely: "Never: unless
With penitent lips and most obedient will."
And Graham said nothing; but the sister wept '
Bitterly; the pale girl yet scarcely grown
Out of her childhood; like a desolate child.

Above that farm near Santa Barbara
The swift years hurried; when Graham Varden turned
Backward his thought it seemed that the keen years:
Had flown like buzzards soaring from the north
Over La Cumbre's top: so rapidly.
The vines that grew when Richard went away
Heavy toward autumn, purpled all their grapes
And gave them to the press; the young wine moved
In deep vats, and was barrelled, racked, and fined,
And slowly ripened in the cellars cool,
And made men merry at heart; the olive boughs
Twelve times let fall their rich maturity;
And Varden, the old man, the housefather,
Lay dying; for his old age had borne him down,
And pressed him— as a packhorse by his burden
Through quicksand at a treacherous river-ford—
So him his years pressed down into the grave.
Dying, he cried out for Richard. Lucy came,
Whom grief and weakness both made pale as snow.
"You are not Richard," moaned the old man,
 "His cheek
Is red and brown, but yours is dull and white,
Although your eyes are brightening." Graham approached
The bedside; his dark clothing and brown hair
Were gray with dust. "Not Richard!" cried the old
— "No, father: I am Graham, your elder boy.
I was about your business in the town

When word was brought me—"It seems that; you have been
Travelling: did you see Richard on the way?"
—"No, father."—"Then your journey was in vain."
With such farewells for his two faithful ones
The old spirit fled fast away; but did not find
Richard in the dim country and shadowy road
Which bodiless it wandered. But it saw
The little farm that lay at the mountain's foot
Dwindle below;— the vineyard, groves, and home
So long loved and inhabited so long.
For all grew dim, and fog rushed in between,
The ocean-fog of evening:— yet it saw
Graham Varden from the alien form that lay
So rigid on the bed, upraise his brow;
And Lucy cry in the corner.... Then it saw
The old woman that had been its body's wife,
Unnoticed until then, at the bed-foot
Lift her brown hands and bring them to her eyes.

The fog moved, and the death-chamber was veiled.
On one side lay the ocean vast and blank;
On the other stood the mountain; far below
The twinkling street of Santa Barbara
Waned like a moon; then the old man's ghost was blown
By the strong wind above La Cumbre's top
Into a desert; there it flickered out,
And sense, and that weak shadow of life, at once
Dissolved; and the great world that knew it not
Was emptied of a soul. But many such
This world retains, ever engendering more.

To annihilation and blank vacancy
Given up, the spirit was lost: its voice was left:
(For naked in the final agony
Man's soul is sometimes of its batlike voice
Most piercing and far heard)—the voice drove on,—
As when a star is blackened, yet its light
Rains on the earth for centuries to come;
From the incalculable gulf and vast of heaven—
Drove north above the immense Tulare plain,
Blind messenger, crying "Richard!" Sierran heights,

Bare, and those hooded with perpetual snow,
It passed; and on the promontoried shore
Of Eagle Lake, remote in the northeast,
Fell; the deep night below Fredonyer Peak
Shook to its wistful cry. A young man woke
Beside his campfire's blackening ember-heap
And starting upright, stirred the ash; whose gleam
Shot ruby lights among the mirrored stars
Below, on the black crystal of the lake.
But he, that wandering man, in grief and awe
Wept silently before his lonely fire
Until pale dawn with light had slain the stars.

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Maldrove

I climbed Old Baldy; and in coming down
Through San Antonio Canyon, stopped the night
With Peter Graham, my somewhat less than friend,
Who has a cottage near the road, and lives
Alone, with one man-servant, all year through.
Peter is old and ruddy and white-haired,
A jovial hermit, who professes more
Than feels, contempt of man and of the time.
“A dreadfully degenerate age,” he said,
At dinner; “and the stench of it comes up
The valley in the evening. Oversea
They are luckier; they have gunpowder to purge
Their breezes; they will live the cleaner for it.
You, meanwhile— you write verses!— But,” he said,
“A better and a younger man than you
Sat in your chair last year about this time,
Slept in the bed you’ll sleep in. Should have slept,
I ought to say, for he was up all night,—
I heard these planks creak with his regular steps,—
And heard him draw the latch and go away
A little before morning. On the floor
We found some papers after he was gone;
And on the hearth—” Graham paused; then earnestly,
“Oh no,” he said, “believe me, your great poets,
Your Dante, Shakespeare, Shelley, are second-rate.
The great ones die unheard of; you’ll be read
A year or so; but Maldrove— the boy’s name—
Fell in a skirmish by the Dardanelles
(A special British blunder, God forgive them!)
Five months ago—unknown—the way he chose.

“I do believe he had written a great poem.
He had wandered our whole coast, and knew it well,
San Diego to Vancouver. All the forms
Of nature, every promontory and bay,
Mountain and valley and gorge and stand of trees,
And all our ways of human life, were grown
Into his heart, as if to finer soil

Transplanted with due care; and he had drawn
These, and the high wild creatures of his thought,
Into one organism, his poem,— burnt
On the hearth here. The night I spoke of, though,
He made a kind of dedication... rash,
Nervous, unfinished,... which I found next day
Tumbled about the floor. I have it here;
And you shall read it.”
— In this wise it ran:—

I

Mother-country, O beautiful beyond
All power of passionate verse, or dream of mine,
Yet take this homeless verse; for it is thine
Prededicate, and doth to thee respond
With bitterness less bitter than the brine
That washes all thy west, and with despair
Less bleak than of thy mountain-summits bare.

II

But waters in the hollows of thy mountains,
In hidden woods that secret leaves seclude,
In sacred wayless heights of solitude,
Remember to be sweet; thy voice of fountains
Is music all year through; that music's mood,
Hidden too deep for feet of men to reach,
Makes verdure there, and in my heart makes speech.

III

This voice of speech if it be good, be gracious,
My country, and refuse not for all thine;
Seeing not as men remember and design
I have remembered and designed the spacious
Frame, and great forms to fill it, and divine
Breath to fulfil the forms; but as thou, divinest
Giant mother, rememberest and designest.

IV

Who shalt in due time, asking no God's leave,
Fill thy large frame with lovely and great sons, '
Successors of these little and verminous ones,
Thy temporary fosterlings: believe,
O mother, and rejoice! That future atones,
Though future, for this present: yea, though it be
But a vision, for this instant infamy.

V

How shall I fall not from so hopeless hope?
How call it more than vision? Can the blast
And furnace of Fate spare it? Yet thou hast
Great stars and lordly in thy horoscope;
Nor the hours of their dominion can be past,
For they have never been; nor the years done,
Being yet unlighted by any cycle of sun.

VI

Is it next year thy people congregate
The world's to their fine festival?— to see
Thy wealth, and the opened inlets of thy sea;
And deal as those that love not thee but hate,
But furrow and spoil thee and make their vaunt of thee,
And call themselves thy lords: but I on hell
To attest I love them little, but thee well.

VII

O dreams, O more innumerable than sand,
Or salt flakes of the sea-froth driven and beaten
On sands the west wind and the north have smitten,
The southeast wind and the east wind from the land
Have piled with wilder dunes and fiercelier bitten
With seaward gullies— O visions of my dreaming,
Numberless as the sea-wrack tossed and streaming!

VIII

Much frailer than the sea-froth: O but sweeter,
O dreams, to me than honey from the hive!
Too sweet to endure, too beautiful to thrive
Beyond the kindly bonds of rhyming metre:
O dreams, O visions, it is you that drive
My heart through love's excess to excess of hate:
For those— are men; but you, O dreams, are great!

IX

Odi et amo! 'Loving thee, I hate!"
The tenderest fieriest mouth of Roman song
Cried to his strumpet-goddess from the long
Passion, the wild desire, the vain regret,
Cried to his strumpet-goddess— Greater wrong;
Urges who cries to men: For love of you
Hatred of all exceeds my love of few!

X

I call you all-abominable! Did she,
The wonderful strumpet-goddess, the all too sweet,
Defile herself with porters from the street
And slaves in the inner chamber? Let her be,
Nor cry at her, nor sniff at her: the feet
Of punishment are waiting at the doors—
O star of harlots, adorable of whores!

XI

I call you all-adorable, O men,
For the Gods' sakes you might be! What you are,
God knows I will not say— not God nor star,
God knows, nor honest nor clean clay! Again
With nostrils nipped adoring from afar
I do salute you for their worthier sakes
In whom your filth has blossomed, and awakes

XIII

To flowers of beauty and courage and clear seeing,
To Achilles or to Shelley: as in her,
The strumpet-goddess found hateworthier
For love's sake, blossomed into lordlier being
Some flowers of beauty: else her worshipper
Had worshipped not, and Lesbia's name were just
As dumb to us as any sister-dust.

XII

Nay, let her rest! One voice is fierce enough,
Her lover's own and tireless, to hunt down
' That white sweet body, naked but the crown
Of shameful verse immortal, through the rough
Alleys and gutters of the eternal town:
Thou let her rest, my song, and let man rest,
And find thee what is better than his best.

XIV

O great hills of my country, thrones of death
Divine, and drought, and godlike solitude!
O terrible blue dome of the unsubdued
God, and the savage temple! O fierce breath
Of winds from the eastern deserts, or imbued
With wild salt odors from the western sea,
Or icy-keen from the higher infinity

XV

Of the upper, the all-irrespirable ether
That not your eagles, O my mountains, dare
Attempt: vainly the vans would whistle there,
Vainly through seeming vacancy; and neither.
May soul of man attain that purest air,
Nor song of mine:— dear song! had we access
To that lustration of high loneliness!

XVI

There all the vermin infamies of men,
The many foulnesses, O song I love
I may not soil thy lips with mention of,
Might surely be forgotten; surely again
Thou and I might be white, and winged above
The turpitudes: as once, when I was young,
And thou, messenger of my heart, unsung.

XVII

Now thou art sung, and comest wide-winged flying
Full on the goal, my eagle of messengers,
My falcon of fair speech! What fool prefers
Long life and bitter, slow and painful dying?
Thou wiser chooseth gladlier, not averse
From the instant immortality of fire
Violent and bright; the sudden kindled pyre

XVIII

Where thou in all thy beauty of briefest youth
Shalt fold both wings and droop each eager eyelid,
Dear singing-bird of keen and undefiled
Plumage! and flee gay-hearted whither Truth
And Beauty are fled— out of the world! Thy smile hid s
Too much contempt of man, and too much love
Toward stars he cannot bear the brightness of.

XIX

Therefore, O thou keen-hearted, rise from the ashen
Couch and the dusty grave, and do thou stand
Before the eternal spirit of this land,
And say in thy sweet voice: I am the passion
Of a young man, and come at his command
Who made me winged and fearless, fair and free,
That I might stand before thee and honor thee.

XX

And say: Not fashioned wholly of due disdain

Am I, nor wholly of hate though justified,
 Thou seest, O mother! But of love and pride
 Also, and keen desire, and bitter pain,
 And of thy beauty, mother.— Let me abide
 Here at thy feet, to await with quiet eyes
 And folded wings thy supreme destinies.
 The reading finished, I looked up; but said
 Nothing. And Graham began: “No more than boy
 Was Maldrove— twenty-two, or three, perhaps,—
 And might have written worthily at length.
 Only— this world— what is there in it to love
 But unresponsive Nature?— He was then
 Not old enough to clarify his dreams
 Into a human image:— nor am I,
 Old though I am: old, jolly and hopeless, I.
 This cankered world, what is there in it to love?
 A world at war is well enough— but this,
 Rotting in peace— commerce— and for a hope
 What but the socialism we’re settling to,
 Quotidian Sunday chicken, and free love
 High over all, the spirit of hugger-mugger,
 And cosmopolitan philanthropy
 With wide wings waving blessing?
 Maldrove went,
 And killed, I hope, a brace of Turks, before
 He dropped among the blundering Britons there;
 Died, and is buried near Achilles’ mound,
 Under the herbless Hellespontine hills.”

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The Three Avilas

I

Tuts west wind striking from the booming boughs
What tones the supreme harp-maker designs;
This roar of the ocean through our little house
Reverberant roof and wall; this roar of the pines
And high-pitched ripple of pine-needles, to rouse
Loud-slumbering Pan himself; this sun that shines
Inexpressibly clear, and wakes the wood
To other than its yesterday's weak mood;—

All the brave rustle and gleam of the world; the tameless
Pulse of music, rapture of light, have shaken
Me certainly from dreams and doubts and flameless
Sloth: I am nearly winged! and feel awoken
Visions and words long wandering lost and aimless,
Fires of dull nights, and pleasures unpartaken,
Or sleepily, of old: but now they flame
As were the very wind and sun in them!

Now I have courage to make song of this
Which makes my very life a song— your love:
That precious flower that edged the immense abyss:
'That star, deathless, beautiful, hung above
The gulf of curded cloud: that blessedness
Unutterable:— what else for singing of
Has my weak voice? What else this hand that tries—
Vainly perhaps— to draw from the immortal skies

Light to make wise with brightness these dull pages,
The unhopeful blanks we write on? Yet behold
To me this happened, even for me did the ages
Pour into an aching heart their purest gold—
Their choice of molten gold!— the privileges
Of what but Gods being given to me to hold
In my poor hand and bosom— yea, but see—
Your love into my life, your lips to me!
Softly, my song, my heart! O softly, lowly,
Speak, and tread carefully underneath the stars,

Or jealous Gods awaken: O they are holy
And covetous, crafty and righteous: what debars
All beauty from completeness? What grows slowly
On every lovely child, and surely mars
His purest brow with evil lines, and strips—
Or death does first— the blossom from his lips?

What but the will of jealous Gods? And therefore
Tremble, not sing, my heart, for happiness!
And what thine inmost blood with crying makes prayer for
Beware thy lips betray not, nor confess
In hearing of shrewd ears; and if thou care for
The life of any loveliness, the less
Appear thou to regard it: huddle it, fold it
In mourning-cloth lest the wise sun behold it!

Number thy sorrows of old time, but tell
Thy happinesses never: rather say,
“Beneath yon pasture-oak I was miserable
For a thwart word; and such another day
Nearby the foaming surge that tripped and fell
In shelter of an oozy rock I lay,
And drunken with immoderate bitter, saw
The sea-mews hawking through the misty flaw.”

Then think— for if we ponder long enough
On omens when the Gods are very good—
It may be they'll avert them— think how tough
And ropy from the bottle, how like blood,
The wine was poured last night, the fumes thereof
Forgot their sleepy pleasantness and stood
Like thick fog in the veins and in the brain,
And choked the course of kindly sleep with pain,

And dreadful bodings of vain dreams; and after,
When we had slept until dawn should have come,
And dawn came not, nor any message-wafer:
Warned the murk night with pallor nor faint hum
From eastward: what bird with a demon's laughter
Awaked the sodden wood, and then was dumb
A moment, and then wailed— until we thought
The night's black hunters had their quarry caught?

Last night was not the first that we had heard
That lamentable demon shriek in the murk
Beyond the pined ravine: no natural bird
Wails like an omen at such dreaming-work:
Nor spoke we of it; but my heart's heart stirred,
And sighed— awake, I knew: O fiends that lurk
On paths that wait our darkling feet, we knew
The terror of you and the voice of you!

II

Omens— why there are omens without number
For wakeful folk to tremble at in the dark.
Therefore beside our bed before we slumber
(Here in our cottage where the mossed pines mark
The wild world's end, and tangled slime-weeds cumber
The outer sea's beginning; the meadowlark
At drippings of the briny rock drinks deep)—
I hang my holstered weapon ere we sleep.
Fool— would I scare with gunpowder and lead
The phantoms that flock hither where earth verges
To chaos, and like gray fingers of the huge dead
Mists rake the high-spun foam of the eastering surges—
The phantoms that flock here about our bed?
The bitter, bitter cry that deathward urges
Those who look long at water? Or the pain—
Life's shepherd-dog—that nips us home again?

There is a healthless gorge we penetrate
Each evening, bringing driftwood from the beach
To glut our hearthstone: either way the great
High windy sanddunes north and southward reach,
Hardening to cliffs not blossom-desolate;
The tide-race with rare shells, the dunes are rich
With sand-verbena yellow and lavender,
The cliffs with blue beach-asters and the flare

Of ill-named paintbrushes, the vivid stalks
Whose upper leaves are tipped with quenchless flame
And unconsuming: everywhere one walks
Is all ablaze with more than I can name
Of miracles of blossom; the wind talks
In wooer's wise to each, and without blame
Filching from each her inmost spirit of scent,
Makes fragrant the universal element.

But in this gorge what fragrance? Here obscurely
The sapless rushes are at root corrupt
And poison the air; here never a wind flows purely
Over the stagnant pools, through juts abrupt
Of the red rock like fangs decayed; here surely
Canidia with Hecate has supped
Right often, and the nightshade here profuse
Has wreathed their writhen temples, and the loose

And bloated pods of that wind-chattering weed
Which maddens horses when they eat of it,
And dog-bane near at hand:— Dreamer, what need?
Is the ravine without a fictive wit
Not venomous enough? Yet here indeed,
Being weary with our driftwood loads, we sit
At evening, and the bats flit overhead,
And on the stagnant bank the reeds are dead.

Large toads across the slimy bottom creep,
And swim not, swollen too fat with marine worms;
The channel of the stream is choked and deep
With refuse of the raging winter storms
That into this foul nook for haven sweep
Seaweeds, and wood of shipwreck, and huge forms
Of twisted trunks and stumps, heaped half-afloat,
That come across the sandbar here and rot.

This is the place to think of when we'd try
To avert omens by much pondering them.
Here let us have our dreams more often lie
Than our tired selves, in hope to find the gem
Of future health in sickness; for the sky
Hereover only wears no anadem;

Lank exhalations from these oozy bars
Arise, and strangle the ever-living stars.
The sunsets that are clear and crystalline,
On floods of amber suckling Hesperus,
Watched from the beach, from high Point Lobos seen
Soft through pure mists have often pleased us;
From Cypress Point the windy trunks between
They sparkle with wild lights tumultuous;
But gazed on from this westward-throated glen
Seem dull red wounds on foreheads of drowned men.

Can human sorrow taint an open valley?
Old passions rot the pale reeds ere they grow?
Thwart love bequeathe as on a notched wand's tally
Its record to the streams?— If that be so—
Where the armies of the newt and serpent rally
At the glen's head, remain from long ago
Reason enough and vestiges enough—
O ghosts, lie quiet! Bones of long dead love,

Lie still and stir not! while I quietly
Tell my deep heart's own sister, my desire
And dear delight, your living misery.
O sister of my heart, under that briar
Which only here grows flowerless, do you see
The mass of stone and mortar, slipped entire
From the steep bank above; the tumbled wall
That choked and turned the rivulet by its fall?

That ruin is remnant of a nest wherein
Two lovers dwelt, accurst from the first breath.
Four generations have been sown, and been (
Reaped, with successive pangs of birth and death,)
Since from the world those lovers brought their sin
And lodged it here:— as much of love and faith
As ever nourished goodness— as much joy—
Fed the grave passions of this girl and boy.

What was their crime? They loved too much; they drew
From the same parent-seed their sweeter lives,
But the boy, stranger-fostered, never knew
His year-younger twin-flower until connives
Time with blind Fate about the season new
When passion chiefly and most violently drives
The winged folk— and young hearts— then Time and Fate
Join these poor two, nor either knows what mate

Is chosen out of all the else-doomless world
For hers, and his, by those conspirators.
Two twigs bound in one fagot to be hurled
Into a fire's white heart and central force—
Two autumn leaves together swept and swirled
Toward the white falls adown a water-course—
Two birds one arrow pierces in mid-air—
Are not more surely doomed than these two were.

They loved; they could not give to take again.
They loved too much; too much to be dispraised
By wiser, cowardlier, less ill-fortuned men.
When the discovery came, and either gazed
On either, they beheld reflected pain,
But neither doubt nor fear, nothing amazed
Nor hesitant; they only knew that here
Their fate had spoken— yet their way was clear.
Men say that he, though Spanish of descent,
Was blond as morning, tall and azure-eyed.
In her more twilit cheek the rose was blent
With olive; and I think that either side
Her clear gray eyes, thick-lidded, somnolent,
The dark brown hair fell downward in such wide
And equal curves as yours has; and was bound.
With double braids the little head around.

They travelled a long exile, and came hither
To the utter end of the world; and here unknown
Hoped to live out their love and lives, and wither ee
As in green shade two deer-bells, which alone
The forest wildbirds visit; they had neither
Converse nor clasp of hand with any one.

They lived like two stars burning in one blue—
Tf the whole huge heaven ensphered no more than two.
O, do you see in hardly alien fate ‘
Our imaged own? We also are come from burning
The world behind us:— be it desolate,
Nor lurk back there to greet us unreturning!
My deep heart’s dear one sister and lone mate,
Yes we would weep— but would we long go mourn-ing—
Were it not also joy— if us like them
One tree had borne, twin-blossoms of one stem?

Here on the slope of this green hill, above
The glen that then was happy, they’d had built
By the Indians’ unskilled hands to house their love
A rude and lovely nest: not then with silt,
With yellow rain-spilth of the dunes, and slough
Of woods and sea, as is with hidden guilt
A channel of clear thoughts, their brook was bound,
But flowed through shadow and shine with crystal sound,

Transparent silver, singing all night long
With virgin voice that answered the vast sea’s;
A slender fearless thread of liquid song,
Bright piping to his boundless harmonies
From wildrose brakes, and the blue-misted throng
Of buckthorns, and the flowering currant-trees.
Also our lovers lined with hollyhocks
Their cabin pathway down to the clean rocks.

Except by one old Indian woman bringing
The daily food, they lived unvisited.
They heard, far off and faint, the Sabbath ringing
Of those Franciscan throats the friars had made,
The Mission bells, by loops of rawhide swinging
Within the domed one of two towers; they led
Nor hopes nor footsteps thither, never seen
Among the throng of worshippers within.

They looked beyond, as we have done so often,
Up to the Santa Lucian hills, and saw
The straw-brown slopes in middle winter soften
To sweet young urgent green; and when the flaw
Drew in from westward and white waves would roughen.
Along Point Lobos, streaming mists would draw
As now, even so lustrous purities
Across their summits arching from the seas.

And brighter and more pure in the rude nest
On the hill's brow their passion burned supreme.
At night their eyelids closing for sweet rest
'Would close upon the tears that burst and stream
When full desire has way: for unoppressed
By custom, and undulled their love would seem
By time, that dulls the great stars; nor laid by
The violent prime of its virginity.

And were they happy? Flaming heart, are we?
Life spoke in theirs as in all lovers' ears,
"This has to end, of course; but meanwhile be
Happy!" And if Marina wept her tears
Avila had his kisses: certainly
Where there are fools there will be loves and fears:
And where are man and woman are two fools:
And Time should cure us: he not even cools!
"Meanwhile be happy!" Meanwhile by what trace
What bloodhound was it tracked them all the way?
They had a brother, and his blood's disgrace
Cried out for blood; or so he thought; and day
Was darkness to him, and the sun's great face
A candle in a bladder, until his prey
Were earthed, and justice done: both family pride
And Christian faith commanded fratricide.

This drove him like a scourge from dreaming youth
And home by the Aztec mountain; he came up
Dark-burning from the midland east and south,
And coastwise crept, and raked the western slope.
But these, to whom each moon a silver mouth
Had seemed, bidding good-by,— began to hope,
Seeing moon from moon catch fire in summer's bosom,
That death was not of love the certain blossom.

An afternoon when the long year was ripe
And drunken with great suns, those lovers went
Down seaward hand in hand: the long-billed snipe
Knew and not fled their steps of slow descent
Customary; the killdeer did not pipe
A note the quicker; of one element
With their wild selves and the ocean and free air
Those wing-borne wanderers knew our lovers were.

Who sought, as was their wont in the hot days,
That little cove the cormorants love to haunt—
And we too— at the Promontory's base,
Well sheltered by enormous cliffs that slant
Southwestward, breaking the main seas; which raise
No foam-flags there, or seldom; but they pant
Tn long exhausted heavings, with low tones
Running among the small and rounded stones.

Here no man ever came except those two
Joined flowers whose deadly fading is at hand.
Here underneath a hollowed rock they drew
Their summer-clothing off, and down the strand
Walked through blue light to the much cooler blue.
She swayed in walking like a slender wand
Beneath her weight of hair; he with one arm
Held her, to keep the tender feet from harm.

Shy in the sun, untamed and beautiful,
Were they as the blue wave, but lovelier white.
They seemed two wild white deer come down to cool
Their autumn fever in the sea's delight.
O, hidden above the cliff what leering-dull.
And viper-hateful eyes had impious sight
Of bodies so divine— is even more hard
And sour to tell than what was afterward.

He saw, and had no pity: save this one—
To kill first and not speak. He drew fair aim,
Resting his musket on some branch ill-grown
Of wind-blistered old pine; then deadly flame
Leaped from the gun-barrel and lighted on
That white boy's breast more bright than its own shame,
More white than any foam-flake of the west,
More loved than the Lord Christ, and more unblest.
For while the water kissed with azure kisses,
And cinctured with clear shadow at the waist
The milk-white column of Marina's blisses,
Avila had just turned to her, and faced
Toward her and shore; even then the scorpion hisses,
Fire-blown and leaden-bodied, in hot haste
To kill the most loved life God ever drew
About these shores and forests, until you.

Full-breasted, with a wide and open heart,
Ungroaning, he took death; whom ere he sank
Her arms held fast; yet from his lips apart
Some crimson drops that trickled the wave drank
Before her poor lips could; she did not start
Nor scream, but dragged him to the pebbled bank,
Panting, not sobbing; there she laid her sweet,
Where last weak ripples lapped his pallid feet.

There, careless of her shining nakedness,
Forgetting all but that her own was dead,
She bent above him, and with lorn caress
Touched, where no more was any fleck of red
To answer love, his flushless cheek; and less
Was on his lips; but where the small wound bled
She heaped and pressed her uncoiled hair; and stanch'd
The bleeding, now the very heart was blanched.

It seems not possible that any man,
And least of all that bloodhound, could be hard
And merciful enough to end her pain
The one remaining way! Yet when she had stared
Long on her dead, and knew him surely slain,
And raised the beauty of her body bared
To its full height of stature, and her arm
Through hair blood-darkened, clinging wet and warm:

Against her breasts and shoulders to her thighs;
And stood by the lone shore of the low sea,
A marble grief, too desolate for cries,
Too desperate for tears:— even then did he
Take second aim: and his unblinded eyes
Are proof that no God cares for what may be
Of horrible, or out of reason, done ‘
Below the foolish looks of the wide sun!

She died; then with her slayer a kind of sense
Of kindred had its way, so that he wept.
(To which effect we have for evidence
His holograph confession the Church kept
First here and then in Monterey, and thence
Took southward, times being troublous.) Then he, crept
Down the steep blossomy cliff, this tearful slayer,
And knelt astrand and mumbled a brief prayer.

Which said, as Noah's praiseworthy two sons
Walked backward toward their father drunk-asleep
And naked, so did he over the stones
Go stumbling backward toward the shining heap
Of limbs yet beautiful, that more than once
Had burned with so much love; now fathom-deep

Beyond desire, beyond burning, beyond breath,
In the inexpressive drunkenness of death.
Touched by the water, in a sunny place,
Among the small round pebbles and beach boulders
Those dead lay close entwined; and he, with face
Averted, peeping sometimes o'er his shoulders
To see his way but not their loveliness,
Unloosed his dyed serape's silver holders,
And, without looking, with one backward sweep,
Flung it above the two there laid asleep.

Thus having somewhat clothed their shame, he made;
A couch of grasses by the cliff's descent,
Beyond the sway of tides, and thereon laid
His brother and his sister; and then went
Hastily to the Mission church, and said
What he had done, and wherefore, and the event,
All to the first-met priest; who issued hurried
Command, and had those lovers brought and buried.

But whether near the Latin-magicked plot
Obscene with hundreds mouldering there, or whether
In some remoter and more decent spot
Well consecrated by the sun and weather,
Their dust has vanished, is recorded not.
But of the house wherein they dwelt together
The wood was burned, and the unflammable stone
With special care was broken and pulled down.

"In order"— runs a postscript clerkly penned
To that confession— "that nor sight nor thought
Of so unspeakable wickedness offend
Lord Jesus, nor the (alas!) yet hardly taught
Rude Indian people.— What we could not mend
We have made vanish." Thus the parchment brought
To benediction, ends as suddenly
As two sweet lives down by the autumn sea.

Now we are here; and where they loved, we love;
And where they died we sit at evenfall
To watch the sunset wither, far above
The sea-cliff's dark and cormorant-haunted wall.
O, there is much that scarce bears thinking of,
It fades so soon— and changes not at all.
Another race, another tongue: but then
The old sobbing yearning hearts of the same men!

Thus dark and bitter ends the bridal song
I meant to make for you: thus let it end!
Those that most love will suffer the most wrong—
We know. For to love well is to contend
With Gods vengeful and envious. O be strong,
My lover, my heart's sister, my one friend!
Be strong, seeing Life's crown-jewels remain these three—
To have strength, and to love much, and to be free.

But as for us, let us forget to fear,
Some brief permitted while, those vengeance.
The woods and shore yet shelter us; and here
Where the world ends in waves and silences
We may be quite as joyful as the clear
Small blossoms of the beach and wilderness;
Those lamps whose light is perfume, which they scatter
Profuse on the wide air and the pale water.

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Ruth Alison

Two waters of the Santa Lucian hills,
Beautiful streams, were named in the elder tongue
The southern rivers: ef Sur Chiquito one;
The larger and more southern el Sur Grande.
These elder names our later language turns
Into the Little River, and Big Sur.
Most beautiful both streams; and both to me,
In memory of the day when first beheld,
Are sacred waters.

Of the larger one
I speak. Under the awful shade immense
It runs, of immemorial redwood boughs
That downward writhe from the columnar trunks;
Trunks that by girth and noblest height, and form
Uncouth, suddenly tapering at the peak,
Recall to mind the giant world, and growths
Exorbitant, that rose from watery soil
Into the fume and rush of monstrous heavens
Ere man was born on earth— so huge they are.
Below them the fair current darkly flows,
By dappling chance of sun made beautiful
And grace of its own ripples. As the vale
Widens, it widens too, more open now ‘
To daylight and the visitings of the wind;
And now as from a fugitive enlarged
The darkening redwood forests draw themselves
A little backward, peopling either side
The low slope of the hills; and on the bank
Few cedar trees and many sycamores
Diffuse their kindly fragrances above
The flashing shallows and the clear green pools.

Thus after many miles of smooth descent
The river gains enlargement uttermost
Of ocean and salt waves. Midway its course
Within that wooded valley, and from thence
To the flat lands against the ocean-gulf,
Lie several farms, weak inroads of few men

Amid the imperturbable majesty
Of the old forest. Alison's of these
Not largest yet was loveliest, for it lay
About the river's westward bend, and where
A dozen rivulets danced into the stream.
They threaded the small pasture as with pearls,
And warbled ever in the nearby grove
Notes like the lowest of a meadowlark's
And mellowest, mixed with rushing liquid noise
That slipped from stone to stone. Ruth Alison,
The farmer's daughter, loved to hear their voice.
A lovely, shy, dove-throated maid she was;
Blond as the honey that her father stored
From hives with white sage pastured; of her years
Not past fourteen, yet grown to height and form
Of womanhood among the favoring hills.

O fortunate was her inheritance
More than of wealth or lordly name! She heard
The rivulets and the river past her home
Go murmuring noon and night; she watched at eve
The golden-jewelled phantoms of the sky
With seasonal change above the redwood tops
Wheel westward their great arcs, from month to month '
Even as from hour to hour seeking the west
And haunts deep-hidden beyond the ocean-plain.
Or in wet winter yet more wonderful
Were the long mists and gray scarfs of the rain,
When all the brooding sky, though stars were none,
Shone on the darkness, full of secret light
As the comb is of honey; and bent down
To touch the trees; nay, mix with them, and make
Their summits into darker clouds, that stood
Motionless, while the others moved among them.
Nor thus alone did heaven intangible
Before her very eyes and in her heart
Prove itself whole with earth: a warbler's tune
Throbbed from the water-footed alder-group
Sufficiently might bridge that facile gulf.
Nor, feeling such communion, felt she less

Her own with both of those: unworded ever—
~ Well nigh unthought of, as too deep for thought—
These feelings were, this knowledge. One who dwells
In the great woods or on the oceanside,
Not strayed by much acquaintance, labors not
To bring into the paltry light of speech
The movements of the soul. Of song I speak not;
For song may treat nobly of noble moods.
Rare are the gifts of song, and many feel
Truths that alone the poet can word, and he
Not well, nor in full substance. For the rest
I hold it greatly better to be mute
Than speak ignobly, as the manner is
Of the anthill populace, whose every mood
Must froth at surface easily into words.

Yet did Ruth lack not for companionship
Of more articulate— closer could not be—
Than with the waters and the cloudy trees
And valley ferns and flowers. Her father indeed—
Great head and beard of russet streaked with white,
Thick-woven, tremulous with age, wherethrough
But nose and eyes were seen; an aquiline curve
That; and the eyes large, tranquil, hazel clear,
Shy like a gentle beastie's, or Pan's own
When favorable— he, fond of stream and field,
Was like those other comrades taciturn
And lovable; her mother had more words,
Yet lovable; so Ruth was not alone.
And she had had brothers and sisters five,
Herself the youngest; but of those who lived
Two dwelt in San Francisco, and one watched
Australian herds, one mined Alaskan quartz.
One more there was of men whom Ruth held dear,
A young man; and her mother smiled upon him.
For he was pleasant to be seen and heard,
Tall, and of mettle and strength to mount and rule
The wildest pony of the hill-pastures.
Nor did Ruth's mother smile the less because
Paul Hayworth was the Widow Hayworth's son,

And of her thousand acres by the sea
And of her pastures and her valley-farms
Heir with his brothers. Ruth deemed little of this,
But liked him well, and when he rode each day
To visit her, would greet him gladly; and soon
Answered his words of love so lovingly
That all the valley knew they were betrothed.

Now, his maternal lands being widely flung,
- An orchard here, a pasture there, and tilth
On the far side of the hills along the sea,
And many laborers to be watched, Paul found
Less than he wished of time to be with Ruth.
And even at the best Ruth's mother often,
Bustling with irksome hospitality,
Came in between their converse: therefore soon
They chose a more convenient trysting-place
Than the small farmhouse with its flapping doors.
A redwood tree it was; hollow with age,
Giant of girth, and highest of all the trees
That flourished in that valley. There they met
Each day a little; or if it could not be
Paul would ride over ere the sun arose
To leave within the hollow of the huge trunk
Word that he could not come, and of his love.
Which Ruth would read, and kiss the paper, and wish
The sun gone down and risen on a new day.
And when he thus was absent, or had come
And gone again too soon, she rarely failed
To honey the tough bark of the old tree
With her sweet lips, and pressure of hands and breast,
Saying, "Good old trunk, my faithful! Do not think
Because I love him I have forgotten you.
No, never will I; nor your sapling kin,
Nor any of you all that guard my life
And look upon my love."— For thus to her
It seemed, that if the beauty of the trees
Were taken from her, life and love alike
Must wither in hard sun, two satin-bells
Fallen, delicatest, or two bronze fritillaries.

Vast of its height that trunk o'ertopped the wood;
Into its hollow an archway led, with brown
Deep-folding bark encrusted; and within
A round tower-chamber opened, or a high
Chapel, to the divinity of the wood
Long-dedicate: upon its rich brown floor
Two half-lights laid their shadows; from the low
And narrow archway one; one from above,
From high and most immeasurably high—
It seemed to whosoever stood within—
Even from a little window that looked forth
High in the narrowing trunk, above the heads
And shadows of the forest roundabout.
In such a chapel, not without strange awe
Standing, did gentle Ruth and her beloved
Make sacred vows; here mouth to mouth, and breast.
To lovely bosom pressing, they grew whole
In strong desire, one being that erst were twain.
Yet such the innocence and power and awe
Of holiest beauty, that the man forbore
As if a naked sword had lain between;
Trembled within himself, tortured himself
Even to the heart, and virgin Ruth remained.
So beauty holiest and divine desire
Contended to the profitless event.

This redwood in the corner farthest north
Stood of Ruth's father's holding; from the house
A quarter mile, and from the stream withdrawn,
Yet in full hearing of it, and near that road
Which winds over high hills, through canyons deep,
And by the booming shore and promontories,
The forty miles northward to Monterey.
By the same road a half hour's gallop north,
Or less when Paul was riding, Jay the farm,
Paul's home; the farmhouse witnessed its own age,
The central part as the olden manner was
Being built of square-hewn logs and chinked with mud;
But this had since been panelled all within;
And now from that rude core two wings were grown,

Each greater than its origin, nor framed
Of logs, but of sawn timber bright with paint
Olive and green, so that the dwelling stood
Distinguished in that country, and far seen
Above its well-pruned orchard-drifts of white
And rows of blackberry vines with blossom on them.
For now it was the entering in of May,
And all the country blithe with blossom. Now,
The rains being over, every week-end night
Was dancing and the wail of violins.
At Hanlon's place. From Manvil's lumber camp,
And from the lime-kiln on the Mill Creek hills,
Men came; and many ranchers roundabout,
Or ranchers' sons, with joy forgathered there
To celebrate the term of a week's toil.
Paul thither begging Ruth to dance with him
Not eagerly she heard. To dance alone
In the deep wood or by the dimpling water
Was pleasant; yet the movements of her heart
Loved not a general mirth; she had no full joy
In that which makes the life of many maids—
Or spoils it, rather. Little and poor the spirit
That most enjoys when least it is alone.
The noble and pure spirit is in itself
Immense enough to be a multitude,
And needs no outward. It may pour its all
In friendship or in love, all, all of itself;
It grudges even a scruple of itself
To babble and mixture muddling heart and brain.

Ruth grudged, and gave to love what love desired,
Grudging no whit for love's sake. At the time
When lingeringly above the hilltop wood
Across the river day's last radiance leans
In latter spring, though sundown lacks an hour
For those who on the ocean headlands dwell,—
Came Paul, driving two horses of his best,
Two grays perfectly mated, mare and foal,
Quick walkers on the climb, and sure of foot
To gallop down; wide-nostrilled too they were,

With slender legs, no fetlocks, and great throats.
Ruth's father had none such. Forward they leaped;
And ere the girl could greet it with her eyes
That mighty redwood the loved trysting-place
Was passed; and near the river with arched necks
The horses ran, pounding the road to rhythm
Of married hoof-beats beautiful to hear.
"They are better under saddle than in harness.
The mare," Paul said, naming them, "shall be yours
When we are wed, for she is quieter;
The gelding mine. We shall ride often, Ruth.
They were my mother's gift to me last year,
My twenty-first." — "They are beautiful," Ruth said.
And now they left the river, and now climbed
The hill with rapid steps. The hilltop gained,
Before them, rosy above the valley-mist,
Shone, all his limestone height one glow of even,
Tall Pico Blanco opposite the sun.
Ruth on the mountain fixed her gaze, and felt.
The heart o'erflowing within her; but Paul's look
Gave on the next hill-ridge, wherever gleamed
White apple blossom and his mother's house.
Before the driveway entrance Paul drew rein;
And, while his horses tossed their heads, and breath
Like smoke came from their nostrils on the cool
And flush of even, he said, "Let us go in
To see my mother: we have time to spare,
Dearest." They entered, and she came to meet them,
Folding the lace mantilla round her head.
For she, by her marriage though of English name,
Hayworth, yet stemmed from the colonial blood
That held the land before, and filled the land
With saints' names and the warble of Latin vowels.
All Spanish hers, no Indian intermingling;
Therefore her eyes though brown were lighter of hue
Than usual in the race; and taller she,
And courtlier; saying, "Ah, you will dance, my
Ruth?
— But beautiful she is, so fair, so slender—
T's she not, Pablo? Hair more pale than gold,

True honey color, Pablo.” And again
To Ruth, when they had entered the house-door:
“I think you do not love to dance, my dear;
You go to please the boy: then please him well,
Or others may well please him. Laugh, be gay!
We are hard to hold, we Aleras; but are held
Worth holding, we.” Thus did she speak, and laughed.
But Ruth, a little frightened, turned her face
To Paul, not answering. So aman, who dreads
Some danger on his lonely path, at night,
When feebly wanes through cloud a watery moon,—
If the close bushes crackle he does not peer
Into the dark, but eyes his faithful dog
Trotting before him within touch of hand.
Thus Ruth; and Paul answered her with a smile,
As meaning, “Have no fear: we are bound too close
Tn love and understanding.” Yet she did
Tremble a little; and the world of men
Seemed large and homeless to her, and all unlike
The faithful wood and narrower world she knew.

- When from the lighted house they issued,— lo,
Swift evening in a moment, as it seemed,
Had fallen, and ways were dark; that limestone peak
Gleamed pallidly; the road fell off downhill
By swift hoofs beaten and ringing wheels; and thus—
As an owl that has hung above a wood
In airy gyres of starlight hour by hour,
But now beholds her prey, the tender leaves
Nibbling of cress or clover, and she falls
All at one rush into the trees and through them—
Thus into the deep midnight of the trees
They plunged from the high hill; along the road
Was heard the murmuring of the Little River.
Here seemed the air stagnant and icy cold
Like to profoundest waveless ocean-depths;
For neither those through the azure opaque above
Does the sun warm, nor can he ever gaze
Into this gorge through the dim vast and green
Of undeciduous foliage layer on layer,

Star-proof, clothing the columns of the wood.
And now above the rush of hoofs and wheels
Shrill sound was heard at pulsant intervals;
To such great distance the sonorous wood
Carried the high notes of the fiddle; the lower
And mellower all were lost; and thus it seemed
A weird and dangerous music in a dream,
Compulsive, not melodious. In a dream
Ruth deemed herself; and when the lights appeared
Of Hanlon's place, she waked.

A platform stood,
Ringed with great paper lanterns purple and red,
Beside the creek and in full forest; and here
The dancers danced. Men from the lumber camp,
Men from the lime-kiln in the Mill Creek hills,
Men from the lonely heights and valley farms:
And with the men what women? These had brought
Their wives, and those their sweethearts; and a few
Being both were neither. Merrily squealed the fiddles;
And the stream murmured low, the august trees
Stood all about, and some fantastically
Were tricked with lanterns for this festival.
Near to the platform was a cabin built,
Which seemed a larger lantern, so aglow
The doorway and the windows were; and here
Liquor was sold, hot, acrid, biting the blood,
Wakening the joyous devil in a man.

Now after Paul had danced with Ruth two rounds
On the foot-shaken platform, and the cry
Ceased, of the strident violins, one came,
A young man of the city, who in these hills
Had dwelt a twelvemonth for his weakness' sake
And ailing of his lungs. Being known to Paul,
He spoke to him, huskily as his wont.
Whom greeting, Paul made Ruth's name known; and Ruth,
Unwilling, liking not the sickness in him,
Danced with him a third round, for so it seemed
Paul wished; and in another's arms did Paul.
A second young man came; with this one too

It was Ruth's lot to dance not willingly,
In the wild lights, under the solemn trees,
Hearing the wind among them, and the water
Below them, and the strident violins.
She turned her head in dancing, then she saw
Paul with a woman habited like the sun
In azure silk and golden jewels; and when
This woman's head below the lantern light
Passed, it was dark but lovely; full of pride
It seemed, and full of joy: the black hair shone,
Diamonded, and curled in sudden waves
To the white throat; and the arms were white and bare,
Slender, and on the wrist a bracelet glowed.
Ruth asked her partner, taming the dislike
She had of him: who answered: "She? The wife
Of Leonard Manvil." — "Manvil?" Ruth replied.
— "Manvil who owns the lumber camp down yonder
At Manvil's Landing, where the ships come in."
— "She is like a swan," thought Ruth within herself,
"That flies in mere proud littleness of heart
Among the wild ducks. Fly to your own, great swan!
Trouble us not with pride, but let us be."
And Ruth, having no guile in her, nor wont
Of masking and the social farce that hides
The social being from its own consciousness—
Ruth, when the music and her dancing-partner
Ceased troubling her, ere Paul approached to claim,
Ran from the circle of light into the wood.
There, sitting on the wet bank of the stream,
Her arm on a great root, her forehead lying
Upon her arm, and all her honeyed hair
Dishevelled even to the earth, soiling itself,
She felt slow tear-drops trickle on her arm
And thence into the water. Meanwhile wailed
The fiddles, flickered the lights, the dance went on.

Paul sought her soon, and found her, comforted her,
Laughing a little at her folly, and said—
“Dear, if you love not dancing we will go.”
And all his heart was drawn to her the more
Because she had wept. Had some one breathed ill words,
Or looked askance? Or had she been afraid
Among so many people? She replied
That she had wept merely from loneliness;
She knew not why she had wept. And now she sobbed,
But happily; and so he brought her home.

The next day early waked Ruth Alison,
And all the night was as a faded dream.
But through her little chamber-window, low,
Caught in with honeysuckle and clematis,
She heard the rivulets murmuring, and the river
Laugh at her evening folly as Paul had done.
And from the window gazing— all in white,
Barefoot she was, warm from the tossed white bed,
And on her shoulders lay in two thick braids
Her honey-colored weight of maiden hair—
She saw in the pearl-gray of early dawn
The redwood tops against the reddening sky
So tall, so great, so earnest, that it seemed
No one could use her ill, no one betray,
No failure spoil her happiness— her own;
And all her fears were folly; and the night
Departed, trailing westward the dark hill.

But she whose beauty when she danced with Paul
Had startled Ruth to tears, awoke meanwhile
And moved within her wider bed. She lay
Northward as far from that strange dancing-ground
As Ruth lived southward; near the ocean she,
Above the sea-cliff; and the ocean’s voice
Murmured along the bases of the rocks.
Could she not sleep? She had no will as yet
To waken. Then she looked upon his face
Who next her lay, her husband’s, dull asleep;
A face not beautiful, though manly enough;
Not old; but worn lately with haggard lines;

A weary brow. Moving in bed, and yet
Not much, lest he be wakened, Manvil's wife
Within her wakeful heart remembered all
The freak had brought her hither.

For at first,
When Manvil bought the forest-lands, and schemed
Over a chart, here should the roads be run;
And here the ships would moor, off the high cliff,
The water being deep enough, and take
Their lading from the cables and the cranes;
And here at the cliff's edge the shingle-mill
Would stand; and with his pencil drew a line
To fence the houses that should cluster it
For the laborers to dwell in— cottages
To house the married, and a building broad,
Three-storied, capable of many beds,
For all the single men:— “But where,” he said,
“Shall ours be built— which cottage will you choose?
For we must be there often.” Then she had laughed,
Answering, ‘You will be there when you must.
Not I: the city does me well enough.
I— on that harsh coast, under the windy hills?
I could not live there, not one day, my dear!’
Then Manvil,— he indeed could master men
Often, but not a woman, not his wife—
He begged forgiveness even for the wrong
Done to her beauty in thought to exile it
From that it loved— the city— where it flowered.
He drew the fence and framed the shingle-mill
And raised the cottages to cluster it,
And in the midst that building gaunt and broad,
Three-storied, capable of many beds.
All this had been five years ago, and more;
But she had never seen the place; though he
Must see it some four months of every year,
And see to its working, and the timber hauled
From deep hill-valleys.

How the ocean boomed
At daybreak on the bases of the rocks!

Was it last week or was it yesterday
She had laughed out with a sudden whim, and said,
“Leonard: since you are going I will go
With you, and see these businesses of yours
That steal you from me six months at a time.”
Thus had she come; she had been here three days,
And heard through morning clouds the shingle-mill
Trumpet its brazen-throated column of steam,
Calling to labor (but to-day it would not,
Being Sunday). She had watched the draught-horses ~
Whiten their collars and round quivering flanks
With odorous foam, dragging huge logs downhill;
And seen the tall trunks reel against the cloud,
Axe-bitten, and cumber the valley with their fall;
And seen the desolated glens below,
Dotted with stumps, and some few scraggy trees
Left standing, as unworthy of the axe.
For all about the mill and up the streams
Was desolation; only the upper glens
Remained yet to be spoiled; and now indeed
There was more tan-bark brought than redwood trunks
To Manvil’s Landing, and the hungry ships
That anchored under cliff. By wagon loads
Incessant from the hills the tan-bark came,
And the stripped oaks rotted where they were felled.

But now her thoughts flew wide, and now they paused
Upon the dance visited yesternight;
A revel uncouth— interesting— a sport
To talk of to her friends at her return.
“A tribe of Corybantic savages”—
She phrased the tale in her own mind.— “And yet,
Friends? Have I friends? Who is my friend up there?
—A tribe of Corybantic savages,
Inflamed with vicious drink and animal heat,
Dancing by flarelight in a gully.— One
Was amiable enough,” she thought.

But now
Men moved without; her husband woke; they dressed.
And after they had breakfasted she said,

“Who was the boy I danced with, the handsome one,
A trifle Spanish, though his eyes were blue?
Black-haired: Haywood, was that his name?”?—

“Hayworth,”

He answered. “His old mother has more land
Than I can own and lease. All south of here,
On the two rivers and the coast below.
And vigilant too: my men cut tan-bark now
On the Reserve, and no one wiser. Hers
We touch not or we’d pay for it— her trees.”
— “T’s she so wealthy?” said the woman.— “Well,
She has land enough,” he answered negligently.
“Sole heir of the old Alera Ranch, and since
Has widened it.”— “A pretty boy,” she said,
“For all the Spanish in him”; and they passed
Out of the house and walked on the high cliff.
It were mere folly to tell all the tale.

A million lives like these riot and mix
About the world, and none keeps record of them.
So on a mountain-flank the rainy grass
Is new in January and lost in June,
And none keeps record of it: the blind hearts
Of men likewise renew themselves and die.
She made occasion; he was glad to yield.
He had heard it called a jest and thought a glory
To love outside the law; and glad to yield
He was, and thought the yielding wholly hers.
She wept indeed; some ice in woman’s heart
Thaws, when she thinks her act is wickedest,
In thin tears, on the verge of joy. A fool,
Not worse, we hold her: who of women or men
Has power to be aught worse— of those at least
That measure life but in the vulgar terms
Of passion— and amusement— and they die?
Others die other deaths. Manvil’s perhaps
Was nobler; for his wife being his no more
He had not much left to work for. She had been
So long his pilot-star— his beautiful—
For all men worship beauty in some wise—
That when she left him the stars were dead to him.

Yet he would not have died; but Government,
That justly indignant God, waxed hot against him
For tan-oaks on the public lands despoiled
Of bark, bare trunks, rotting where they were felled.
Therefore— he would have slept in prison else,
With shame and loss beyond his power to bear—
He ended, a revolver in his mouth.

But Ruth— O sovereign Nature of the trees,
Quiet and long-enduring— of the streams,
Eternally refreshed, clear-flowing and new—.
O mighty Mother of more than life— for thou
Hauntest the barren eminences of hills
Where no life lives but of the fruitless grass;
And on the peaks beyond of glimmering stone
Makest thy habitation; and far up
In lifeless wingless heaven unfoldest all
Thy spirit of power, whether in the azure noon,
Or at the many-colored ends of day,
Or on the abysm of darkness, populous
With hosts innumerable of infinite light:—
O mighty Mother, comfort thy poor child!
She also is a part of all that is;
And lo, except thou help her, she remains
Desolate.

For each day Ruth Alison
Ran early to that hollow redwood tree,
Giant of girth, and highest of all the trees
That flourished in her valley. Thither came
Paul too, and she rejoiced to be with him.
Then for some days he failed her; and she came,
And was alone, and went away alone.
But the fourth day he came. ““O Paul,” she said,
“Why have you failed me?” And he lied, and said:
“My mother wanted stores from Monterey
And sent me for them. I was there two days,
Bargaining, and I came again last night.”

Then once again he failed her for three days.
And when he came he cried, “O Ruth, I am man,
Not angel! I have been a traitor to you,

I have played the fool, I have lied, wasted myself:
And yet, whatever comes of it, I swear
I love you only, Ruth, you evermore
To the pale end of life and after dark.”
She clung to him, she wept, pardoning all,
All—all—she knew not what—much more than all.
He could not stay, but like a man afraid
Unclassed her arms that clung to him, kissed once
Her forehead, under the hair, above the tears,
And caught his horse, and mounting fled away.
She, prone on the dry mouldering forest-slough
That masked the old tree’s hidden roots, could hear
The hoof-beats of his horse: they waned and ceased
Far off; the murmuring river came between,
And like a bird a rivulet sang close by.
O Ruth, was it indeed so hard to bear?
Was it impossible, poor child, to bear it?
Let the elder and the strong, hearts all of iron,
Hammered by Fate with iron and frequent strokes,
Harden themselves in wisdom and live on.
So eager and so beautiful a child
Might well be tender too: was hers a face
For sorrow to make spoil of? Hers indeed
Was a mild heart easily to be bruised,
Not long-enduring, soft and flowerlike sweet.
She came each morning to the redwood tree
Vainly; each evening she returned in vain,
And always paler. Yet it is not said
She perished of this grief; but sure it is
That ere the brown bees filled their autumn cells
From the late lupine blossoms, ere the rain
Freshened October nights, Ruth failed to come
To the tall tree; and ere much rain was fallen
Her flowerlike body fell into the earth.
Men dream large dreams of life beyond this world:
For her dear sake I wish them true. O God,
Can it be possible so fair a spirit
Passed, and no remnant left? We must have strength
Both to love beauty and to love the truth
Equally. Let no more be said than this—

Had he been faithful she would have been most happy,
Being of her nature beautiful, and bound
To the great nature of that lonely place
In harmony: most happy she would have been.
He had no faith; but now she suffers not.
She is calm, being dead; and the huge trees are calm;
And the vast ocean, though his countenance
Be vexed with storm, is very calm at heart.
That following winter there were many storms,
And trees uprooted. Thrice the thunder roared
Right over the fair vale where Ruth had lived,
With sharp and awful voices. The third morn
Ruth's father went forth, sorrowing as his wont,
To gaze on the swoll'n river; but returned
Before his wont, shaken with grief, and said,
"Our daughter's redwood has been broken, Mother."
She came, and they two, weeping, looked upon
The wreck of broad limbs shattered, and the huge trunk
Split in four fragments even to its base,
All prone among the ruins of lesser growth.

The next year at this place were saplings grown
From the ancient root; but not after their kind
Of green and joyous leafage. White were these,
Wax-white, with no least hint of kindly green.
Whether the lightning at one stroke had changed
The inmost natural essence of their sap,
Drawing the color from it, I cannot say.
The simple people of the countryside,
Liking to dream into more visible form
The doubtless bond that links all beings with all,
Imagine that the foliage thus grew white
Feeling the maiden's grief: her tree it was,
Her trysting-place; and he that passes there
May even now behold in the deep wood
That leafage, under shadow of loftier boughs
All shining white, a marvel in the wood.
Close by, the Big Sur River murmuring flows.
And if you pass northward, and cross the hills,
And cross the Little River, and Mill Creek too,

Then you will see on the bleak ocean-cliff,
Under bare windy hills, a settlement
Of cottages about one building, broad,
Three-storied, capable of many beds;
And thereby an old mill. These vacant stand,
All; and the grass will hardly grow between them,
And there is hardly a tree for miles around.

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Dorothy Atwell

Under the hill-range windy and high
That walls the coast from wave to sky
Between Point Lobos and Point Sur,
Dorothy Atwell, five years old,
With sunny eyes and hair of gold,
Lived in a ranchhouse low and poor.

There she was born: a place too wild
And desolate for such a child
To grow to girlhood happily,
The world would think; and so do I.
Nothing is there but hill and sky
And voices of the vast flat sea.

A poet, who would put away
The mingled color of every day
To live one-minded, calm, and still,
And ponder a world simplified,
Might choose the place,— so very wide
The sea, so very bare the hill!
Yet, as the poet would soon perceive
The passions and the powers that live
Within those large and simple things,
Even so the child, and even more:—
To stand within her father's door
Thrilled her with wondrous wanderings.
She loved to watch the sombre boughs
Of cypresses before the house,
Which the wind worried like a hound;
And the storm broke them every year,
But still in strife they lived, and were
The only trees for miles around.
She heard the cries of men who drove
Their cattle in the hills; her love
At other times would fix upon
Some tiny dooryard flower that leaned
Low down to earth under the wind
And scarcely dared to eye the sun.
And she had terrors too: with cloud

The hill's vast head was often bowed
As by a weight too great to bear;
The sun was gone, the sky was black;
It seemed the heights must groan, must break,
Under the burden of thick air.

The mighty motions of the sea
Brought her much joy; they grew to be
So fearful too that oft she wept.
Her mother then must lay the care
Of the household by, and comfort her
With song until her sorrow slept.

This little maid's great pleasure was
To watch the mail-stage daily pass
With its two horses and their driver.
Mondays it came from Monterey,
And Tuesdays northward took its way,
Returning from the Big Sur River.

Of the two horses one was white;
This one was Dorothy's delight,
So tall he was, and trotted high.
The other, like her father's own,
Was but an ordinary brown,
Less pleasing to the childish eye.
Small Dorothy would often wait
For hours beside the driveway gate
Until they came; once, laughingly,
The driver lifted her, to pat
The white's long velvet nose;— and that
Was a great day for Dorothy!

But soon appeared a darker day
Of strange confusion and dismay.
For at the hour when mostly passed
The stage, the driver came alone,
A man disastrous, woe-begone,
And panting hard, and running fast.

“Where is your father?” From the shed
Her father coming, the man said,
“Fetch ropes, and help! My team is gone
Over the cliff!’ And ropes in haste
They found, and up the road they raced,
And Dorothy was left alone.

She heard the tale her father told
That evening— how the wagon rolled
Over the rocks into the sea.
Hanlon (the driver’s name) had seen
The earliest white globe-tulips lean
Above the road; and eagerly

Dismounting from the seat to pluck
Their fragile beauty, by ill luck
On the brake-lever he had looped
His reins; the wagon then was standing
Where the steep grade from Manvil’s Landing
Edges the cliff; the rock is scooped
Below; and when the horses lowered
Their heads to crop green herbage, toward
The sea, and brink of that abyss,
They slipped the brake; the wagon lunged
Forward; the frightened horses plunged
Headforemost down the precipice.
“Their necks were broken,” Atwell said.
“The brown one in the waves lay dead;
We saw it rolling back and forth
Under the cliff upon the rocks;
And gulls were gathered there in flocks,
Wheeling from the south and north.”
— “But the white horse?” said Dorothy.
“The white one:— him we could not see.
He must have got into the caves
At the cliff’s foot: they often draw
Seaweed and driftwood down. We saw
The brown one rolling in the waves.”

To Dorothy the white had seemed,
Strange always, like a creature dreamed,
Or told of in a fairy-book;
And now his disappearance lay
Strange on her mind; he had gone away
Into the caves; and one might look

Forever, and not see again
The tossing of his long white mane,
The lifting of his hard white feet.
The brown, though dead, was in the waves;
But this one in the secret caves
Had gone to what obscure retreat!

This fancy so her mind possessed
She could not listen to the rest
That by her father then was spoken:
How they had climbed with ropes, and got
The mail-sacks from the surf, but not
Anything else, for all was broken.
This fancy still so heavily lay
Upon her heart that when, next day,
The stage came, a new wagon, drawn
By other horses,— then it seemed
The white was also there, and gleamed
Ahead of them, and led them on.

But daily, and each day the same,
The new stage passing by, became
Familiar; and more rarely seen
That phantom leader white and tall
Soon faded from her thoughts, and all
Appeared as it had always been.

Below the hill, below the house,
Under the sea-cliff's misty brows,
There is a narrow beach of sand;
No smaller shingle well could be;
Yet smooth it is, and fronts the sea,
Closed with huge rocks on either hand.

Thither, when summer days began,

The little maiden often ran,
And like a sandpiper would flit
Along the foam's edge many an hour,
Or mould the sand in mound or tower,
And gather it and scatter it.
There seaweed red and brown and blue,
Or mottled, or of mingled hue,
Made glad and bright her curious eyes,
And shells, of tint yet vivider,
And those that most delighted her,
In color and form like butterflies.
There by her mother's knee she played
One day, when suddenly afraid,
She cried, "O mother! the white horse
Is swimming to us from his cave!"
Her mother looked: it was a wave
Breaking with more than usual force
On the low sand; and swift and tall
It moved, and white with foam was all
Its hollow front; and curled, and broke.
"See, it's a wave," the mother said.
And Dorothy was still afraid,
But not another word she spoke.
A later day she watched the sea,
Mute, a long while, and finally
Said, "Mother dear, what does it want?
What is it crying for? It seems
To reach for something in its dreams,
And like a dog it seems to pant."

October came, the loud south blew,
Foreboding showers, but still with dew
At dawn the sun-bleached grass was bright.
A half-moon waning in mid-sky
Showed broken vapors thin and high
Northward rushing o'er the night.

The cypress boughs were bent and thinned,
The ocean roared under the wind,
The house-walls creaked; and Dorothy
Cried in her sleep, then waking cried.
Her mother rose, and by her side
Standing, she heard the roar of the sea.

“What ails you, child?” — “He comes too near
In darkness, mother; I cannot bear
To have him gallop round and round!
I often tremble in my bed
Because I hear him neigh,” she said,
“And feel his hoof-beat shake the ground.”
— “You hear the waves that never are still,
You feel the wind shaking the hill,
And nothing more,” her mother said.
“Now sleep, as a good girl should do;
Nothing will hurt nor waken you,
And I will sit beside your bed

“A little while, and sing you a song.”
— “Mother,” she answered, “‘is it wrong
To be afraid? I know the sea
And the wind, I hear them every day:
But— I should like to have you stay
Beside the bed, and sing to me.”

— “Down the white daisy
Nestled in grass
When the wind was loud.
The wind is crazy,
Puffing a cloud;
The wind is crazy,
But the wind will pass.
Blustering, blustering,
Over my nest
Deep in the grass.
“Laughed the white daisy,
Here will I rest,
Deep in the grass,
Deep in the nest.

Let him bluster and blow:
Do I care, do I care?
He is cold in the air,
I am warm and low;
Warm and low
I rest.

“Rest, little daughter.” The low strain
Was hummed a second time, and then
The mother tip-toed quietly
Away; and murmured half asleep,
Hearing the wind howl in from the deep,
“Sleep, little daughter Dorothy.”

Who slept; but often all that year
Would wake in the night and wail for fear;
And even while the sunlight shone
Was rarely happy as of old:—
So pitiful it seemed and cold
In the deep caves to dwell alone.
She thought that horses of all food
Like barley best: barley she strewed
Upon the beach below the hill,
And wisps of hay she scattered there:
Next morning all the beach was bare;
And Dorothy was pleased, and still

Was full of pity. In the night
She pitied while she feared— so white
The horse had been, so beautiful!
This passion still renewed made weak
The unfoldings of her youth; her cheek
Grew pale, her azure eyes grew dull.

The strong will thrive on bitter food
And simplest; nothing is not good
For the most strong: but for a child—
A spirit unformed and all to be—
That world of only hill and sea
Might prove too simple and too wild.

Too much of chaos in a glance,

Too terrible significance
In each quotidian act and sight:
Even for the full-grown man must be—
If he can feel, if he can see—
A danger in that infinite.
If toward the land you look, on high
Stands the hill, and over it the sky,
And nothing further can be seen.
If oceanward, no form is there
But the skyline clear, the earthline bare,
The hard blue sea a band between.
The hard blue sea: but down beneath
At the cliff's foot it seemed to breathe;
It slid white fingers of long spray
Among the rocks; it moaned and panted;
Something it lacked, something it wanted,
Begged for and sought for night and day.
Dorothy knew not what it sought:
Of her most precious thing she thought,
Her own small painted chair, and went
Tottering with too great a burthen
Across the road, and down the earthen
Slope, and the stairlike rock-descent.
She waded on the hard wet beach
Until the foam-swirls' chill could reach
Up to her knees; and there she laid
On the retreating wave her treasure,
The small red chair, her chiefest pleasure,
The painted chair her father had made.

“Dear beautiful white horse,” prayed she,—
For in her mind the rush of the sea
And the white horse were grown to one—
“Dear horse, I have brought the best I have
To make you happy in your cave
Although you cannot see the sun.”

Then terror seized her, and she fled
Homeward; that night she mourned in bed
The too-accepted sacrifice.
Her parents questioned her in vain,
And pondered late, nor guessed what pain
Subdued the childhood in her eyes.

Before the long year turned its ring
Back to the blossom-time of spring
Wee Dorothy was fallen ill;
She wasted with a fever slow,
And still when the wind was heard to blow
Cried that his hoof-beat shook the hill!
What end had been of her distress
I cannot say, I dare not guess.
She might have grown at weary length
Of days, insensitive to all
Influences that please or appall;
She might have conquered— a child's strength

Being more than we divine— the fear
And pity which tormented her;
Or in eventual madness known
The forms her fever trafficked in,—
The phantoms;— or sole priestess been
Of a religion all her own.

But Fate ruled better; for the man
Her father, seeing her ever wan
Except at night in fever's hold;
Her blue eyes often wet, and growing
Dim with a shadow past his knowing;
And her voice dull, her small hands cold;—

He sold, in hope to do her good,
His land:— too much a solitude,
It seemed for one so young and frail.
Inland they journeyed; when the sea
Vanished, right glad was Dorothy;
With every mile she grew less pale.
Forgetting that sea-solitude,
Growing up to lovely womanhood,
In a high Maderan valley shines
The golden head of Dorothy;
The sunlight glances there with glee
Between the wheatlands and the vines.

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The Old Farmer

(The small farm described here is about two miles north of the Big Sur postoffice. Its owner, who was known as the best bee-man of the neighborhood, sold it in his old age and went to the city, to live with his son. Eventually—out of pure homesickness, it would seem—he committed suicide.)

With my own hands my little house
I built below the redwood boughs
Beside the Big Sur River.
With my own hands I split the shakes,
And laid the rain-tight roof; my axe
Rang all day in the deep wood
To make a clearing where it stood.

I drew a fence, and trained in lines
My blackberry and raspberry vines;
And eastward of the river,
Where there were but few trees, I cut
The rest, and in that sunny spot
I planted an orchard:— who will waste
The fruit that I shall never taste?

Above the rich dark river-silt;
A dike of logs and stones I built
To hold the flooding river;
And still from dawn-gray to night-gloom
I toiled, and made a narrow flame
Of hollowed redwood stems, to yield
Water for my alfalfa field.

And on the hill where thick white sage
Makes plentiful bee-pasturage
Above the shadowed river
I set the white hives close together,
Carefully; and in late spring weather
What joy, what joy I had to hear
My honey-gatherers humming clear!

To think of it will bring me harm:
Why did I leave my little farm
Beside the friendly river?
It is not good for me to think
How flamed upon the water-brink,
Wet-leaved from winter's earliest showers,
The autumn-golden sycamores.

Nor of the solid redwood bank
Behind:— the deer came down and drank,
Their forehoofs in the river;
And grazed on the cress-bordered lawn
Below the sycamores at dawn;
And at the moonrise I could hear—
Could see them, if the night was clear.

Like towers of the giant days
The close-branched redwoods in the haze
Above the sliding river
Stood up at twilight; they would seem
To overlook the stars, if beam
Of any star could pierce the high
Soft vapors of that shining sky.

Here the sky never shines so much,
And there are few green things to touch.

O! does my lovely river
Laugh ever as it used to do?
And run the deep green shadows through,
And ripple on low stones, and make
Behind the ocean-bar a lake?
It was eight miles of valley-land
Down to the sea-mouth and the sand,
Following the river.

I walked it last to get the pay
For my poor farm.... A holiday
My life has been since then— and yet
I often grow so tired of it!
My son is very good to me
Here in the town; I ought to be
Glad to have left my river.

I see it in my dreams; I hear
Its music murmuring in my ear;
I am so old and white and weak
I often think my heart will break.

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At Lindsay's Cabin

Here, by the nameless little brook that runs
With no more rustle than a gliding snake
Among its cresses, Lindsay often used
To sit all day and gaze upon the brook,
Or the dark redwoods, or a moving cloud.
At other times he wandered lone the hills
Into the farther wood. Yonder you see,
Mossed over, and the roof fallen in with age,
The cabin that he built with his own hands—
Or hut: it seems to melt into the hill
Naturally; as fourteen years ago
It grew and had its being: for no squared beam
Was built into it, no sawn plank nor lath,
But redwood split according to the grain
In shakes and slabs. There Lindsay dwelt; and those
Who passed would often wonder what he thought
All the long days, and how his time was spent.
He kept no cattle, and he tilled no soil
Except one little garden of few herbs;
He owned nor horse, nor orchard, nor a hive
To care for, and but rarely talked with man.
Hanlon, who drove the mail from Monterey,
Knew most about him: by what meat he lived
Knew, for he brought it to him; and that he read
Believed, for he had brought a case of books,
Both large and heavy, from the town.— And yet
Lindsay had not so much as turned a leaf
Since they were come; he read, perhaps, the brook,
Or the green redwoods, or a moving cloud.
Steep, as you see, above his cabin home
Rise the two hills each way from the ravine,
With weight of redwoods overhung; and here
The sun but rarely enters; yonder, though,
Where on a low stone by the rivulet
He often used to sit, yonder the sun
Pours fullest radiance all the afternoon
If heaven be clear; for south and west the hills
And trees are gapped; and yellow grow the weeds

In summer by the brookside, glittering flows
The brook among its cresses and tall ferns.
Not out of hatred of the race of men
Did Lindsay dwell alone; kindly he was;
So Carlos Black might witness, were he here.
For Black, who worked at Manvil's shingle-mill,
Mishandled once the blocks;— from the elbow down.
His arm was mangled by the whirling saw.
His wife, who nursed three children, nursed him too;
Then, for he could not work, and wages lacked,
The household lacked for bread; but Lindsay came—
Hanlon had told him of it— and helped the house
More than with alms. Food he provided; rest
He brought the toiling woman; for he toiled,
Scrubbed, set the house in order, cooked the food,
Tended the torn flesh with clean bandages;
And, when a fever took the man, he held him
By strength of hand; by strength of hand he forced
The broth between his teeth; and Carlos Black
Lived: but with money Lindsay lent him after,
Went north; he tills his farm in Oregon,
A man content, and capable of toil.
Lindsay went back to his cabin, and would sit
Daylong beside the brook, or day and night
Wander the distant canyons and dark hills,
A solitary man. Three years he lived
Here, in this fashion. At the third year's end,
A matter, people judged, of some concern
Called him to San Francisco. It was thought
In brief while he'd return;— two years went by
Before he did; and he who had gone away
Straight-shouldered, middle-aged, in prime of strength,
Returned old, weak, full of mortality,
A weary head, with more white hair than gray.
The tale of his misfortune is not known
Fully; he never spoke of it; but one
Who had helped him in his travel, passing here,
Told some of it, and men conjecture more.

For when he reached the city— (it is said

The errand regarded certain property
Invested, wherewithal he sparely lived)—
The city reached, the business looked into,
Yet incomplete until the second day,
He felt a sudden faintness at the heart
Among so many people: multitudes
They moved the streets, an endless aimless throng,
As in a broken anthill scurry the ants,
And seem to have no aim, but everywhere
In multitudinous confusion mingled
Stream through the little, close, and earthy ways:
Even thus they swarmed the city, and Lindsay felt
That none among so many destinies
Could be of moment, seeing so many they were,
So mixed and all-inextricable.— But when
Evening was fallen, and hardly could one see
The stars of heaven, so many and bright the lamps,
An endless aimless glitter: then indeed
The fancy grew more strange, the crowd was merged
Into one being unformable and huge,
A monster of convulsive breath, a life
Alien to man though all composed of men,
Unfriendly, menacing, fearfully alive.
Thus too the forest with its million trees
Had merged into one being the while he watched,
Sitting beside the brook on the low stone;
But this had never been unkindly, this
Though alien never dreadful. Lindsay groaned
To be back yonder where the rivers run,
And men are few,— thence individual souls,
And often like the hills in dignity.

Afraid of his own fear he sought the draught
Which makes the healthful healthfully rejoice
If moderately, and calms the uncomfited;
But should there lie a poison at the heart,—
Unwisdom, illness, baseness,— wakening that,
Oft makes the man go mad in walking sleep.

This man's ill fancies were a poison to him:—
O, to how many others those have been
Poisonous, and the atmosphere of towns
Been pestilential! Not the feeble in chief
Fall victim to it; often the free, the best,
Men full of generous blood: such Lindsay was
Through all the austerity of lonely days.

He drank; and he was gladdened; that ill dream
Vanished; and men he spoke with seemed once more
Men, not mere atoms of the monstrous beast.
He dreaded lest the dream in sleep return,
And knew not when he slept— or his mind slept,
The body moving still.

He awoke, and heard
Creakings, and murmur of water, and a voice
That thundered on his dream. The sails were spread;
The morning wind blew right abaft, the sea
Rippled immeasurably from wave to wave,
Bright gold on azure; under the eastern sun
Far yellow hills pierced a faint line of fog.
Then Lindsay from his mates learned bitter news.
The ship was English, bound for Liverpool
Through the Magellan Straits. And he was bound,
He, with the ship. He had come aboard last night,
Like a corpse, carried in men's hands, and yet
Had somehow signed the paper binding him.
Here, with a deep laugh from the hair-grown chest,
A mighty-shouldered seaman spoke the word,
Shanghaied,— a word which echoed night and day
Like shame in Lindsay's ears; yet he endured.
Strength to desire the best, and strength to endure
Albeit the worst: these both are in man's heart
Borne:— happy is he who but the first of these
Knows and requires: and yet not miserable,
Not wholly miserable must he be named
Whom the other and the sadder power supports.
Lindsay endured and failed not; all that day
Performed his work, although with hands unskilled,
Hands in such toil unpractised, quick to bleed.

That evening late, flickered, a low earth-star,
The light which marks Point Pinos, westernmost
Horn of the Monterey Peninsula.
He saw it; he dared not think, who yet must feel,
How in the dark the tall peninsular pines
Move, sighing, below the myriad gleam of stars;
How on the cliff, gaunt forms above the gray
Of infinite ocean, gleam the cypresses.
O from thence on, with yearning heart, and eyes
Most desolate, he shoreward gazing knew
Albeit unseen the Santa Lucian hills,
Which in the north tall pines, and southerly
The mightier redwoods mass with living depth
Of shadow and sweet odor: it was this
That mastered him, and made unwilling eyes
Wet, while he gazed; this thought of leafy air,
And the rare smell of cedars by the stream,
And the all-enfolding sweet and subtle breath
Of redwood boughs, blown from deep canyons up
Over the windy ridges of dark hills.

An hour before the dawn he wakeful saw
The home-light flash— that beacon of Point Sur
Set in the westward forehead of the rock.
Then, longing like an agony came upon him
To leap over the side and strike for shore
And liberty and home. Death had been his
In those wide waves, under the infinite stars;
And this he knew. Death, a perpetual loss:
The present but a season's or a year's:
Too long— he yet at length would turn again
Home: but from death is no returning home.

What storms encountered cannot profit now
To tell, nor what half desperate weeks of calm
Retarded the slow voyage. Yet port at length
Was gained; but Lindsay ere that day, though still
He labored with the rest and did his part,
Was fallen sick; and when he came ashore
Lay five weeks near to death, within which time
The wages of his bondage were all spent.

And then what long delays withheld him there,
 A penniless man and friendless, ere in time
 He gathered help and money from afar,
 Need not be told. After long lapse of hope
 He sailed at length, and homeward, and came home.
 It is avouched by those who witnessed it
 That when by the mail-stage from Monterey
 He rode again,—not strong as once he was,
 But weak and old, full of mortality,—
 Seeing, up the creek of San José, the first
 Of redwoods flourish, like a child he wept,
 A little child who has wandered and been lost,
 And then its mother finds it. He, white-haired,
 Thus wept, and all had pity on him. He lived
 Five years thereafter in the cabin here,
 And here he was found dead, a day in spring.
 I think his life was largely fortunate.
 Useless, you say? Man, what is man to judge
 Of use and unuse? Are the weeds that grow
 Deep in the dark abysms of the eyeless wave,
 Yielding the fish no pasture,— are the flowers
 No wildbird ever saw, so buried they are
 In deep green hollows of the ancient wood—
 Are therefore these unuseful?— Man to man
 Being helpful is of worth, yet man to man
 Is not the whole— perhaps is the least part
 Of the infinite interrelation of all being.
 This man, as others love a woman, he
 His chosen valley. Look! For I believe
 His love hath made it the more beautiful. '

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The Mill Creek Farm

Don't close the window; open it wide: there's a touch
Of frost in the air, I know; but not so much
That you need to shut me in from the noise of the stream.

I've heard it these forty-three years through waking and dream,
Winter and summer; I'll hear it a short while more.

But you, if you're cold,— that coonskin coat by the door—
I shan't need it again; if I should, you might wear it the same.
A good kind girl you've been to me, dear; you won't blame
My old whims, Katie; I couldn't be happy without
The noise of the creek— You're turning it inside out:
Fool girl! I can't help you. Well; so you've gotten it on,
And are warm enough now, I hope. I said to my

John,

“She's a good girl, John, and pretty, a joy to the sight,
But a fool girl, John.”— He'd have you, though.

He was right;

And lucky to get you: lucky for me, you think,
What with the pills to take and the doses to drink,
That I've one of my kin to nurse me; and you so kind. kind.
But it's easy enough to die when you make up your mind.
I could die alone; it would save us trouble, my dear;
But I'm glad that you married John; and I'm glad you're here.

Listen! The creek's alive and laughing to-night,
Tumbling over its pebbles.

Turn down the light,

Will you, Katie? or lower the lamp-shade: there.

Soon as my eyes undazzle after the glare

Maybe I'll get one look at a couple of stars

Over the buck-eyes, under the window-bars.

It's a clear night, isn't it, Katie? And winter; yes;

Drawing the bolt for January. I guess

The Northern Cross should be yonder, left of the hill,

Northwestward, over the valley-mouth. Look, if you will.

I can see the bright star of the top. The Dipper, you know,

Is down in the north, it will rise in three hours or so,

And stand like a giant, straight up, with its foot on the crest,

Where the wagon-road crosses the ridge. My window looks west;

The Dipper will rise, but I never shall see it again.

Katie: you're used to the town, I know; but then
You're too young to be set in your ways:—it'll do no harm,
My asking... whether you think you could keep the farm?

Well, dear, it doesn't matter. It's yours when I die,
If you like it or not. You'll sell it: I know who'll buy.
The Widow Hayworth has wanted it thirty year—
Don't sell too cheap; take time and bargain, my dear—
Thirty year:— she'll have it in thirty-one,
And the stars will rise the same, and the creek will run,
And the buck-eyes leaf, and the orchard blossom, and all.
— Dead or alive it'll run; summer and fall,
Morning and night.—The creek, what else?

— It roars

In spring like an ocean under the sycamores.
In summer it ripples and tinkles from rock to rock,
Feeling for shade. But now— you can hear it talk
Like a woman, laugh like a child, sing like a bird,
Now in the winter; the forty-third that I've heard
Its music run to the sea; and the last one, too.

Katie, you needn't to cry; you're a fool if you do.
Fool girl, I always said it.

'What's that?— In heaven?—

A place for children to plan for; I'm eighty-seven.
You'll know, when you get to be tired and sleepy and white,
That the only word at the end is plain Good-night.

I've done some good in the world: I built the road
Over the hill, where to-morrow the stage with its load
Will joggle and climb; and the next day down at full trot.
To-morrow maybe I'll hear it pass; but not
Day-after-to-morrow. I built the road; and I built built
The dam that gave me four acres of river-silt,
And feed for the cows; and I planted the orchard below.
Then, Katie, the hives to care for: five in a row,
Six rows; and the eight new stands. You'll watch when they swarm....
— For a minute I dreamed you were going to keep the farm,
Katie; but now I remember. Well... let it be.

The Widow has thousands of acres; a wise one, she;
Flat land, wonderful grazing, down by the coast;
And still she crawls up the creeks. She's a mortgage on most
Of Cauldwell's ranch; and she closed Will Hanlon out:
The last eight years she's belted me all about;
And run her line-fence over the hill both ways.
Now she can pull it down. Her steers will graze
From the tide-flats up the creek to the door of the house,
And crop green apples in August from the orchard boughs.
Well, Katie, it can't be helped. They're all of them gone,
Bob and Henry and David,— the last was John;
And you're but a fool of a girl, and the creek runs on.

Queer that a man's four boys must die, and the land
Fall from their father's into the stranger's hand!
I thought of that when I visited you in town,
Katie, and saw the people run up and down,
Trotting the streets; and young fellows busy with work
Not fit for a man to put hand to: waiter and clerk,
Poolroom loafer and barroom lapper: I thought,
Will the blessed country end like me, be caught
At the break-up time, when the world turns upside down,
With her sons all gone and rotted away in town?
Not a man with strength to keep hold of the beau-tiful land,
And the stranger's hulls off-shore, and the stranger's hand
Reaching up to the mountains.

A damnable dream

To go to sleep with: better the noise of the stream.

But I can't... Can you hear it, Katie? What's wrong? The creek
Seems to have stopped... maybe I'm getting too weak
For hearing it now.

Don't be a fool, Kate.... What?

— You think I shall hear John's voice— when I can't hear that!

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The Belled Doe

A WATERFALL

Hung never wavering from the mountain wall,
So windless was the vale: a thread of fleece
Much longer than the tallest cedar trees,
Or the dark-tufted beauty of any fir,
The waterfall appeared; calm whisperer
Of music all night long and all the day.
Below that precipice the plowland lay,
Crossed by the brook; the lowly vine-grown house
Was under broad twin oaks, but orchard boughs
Heavy with ripening apples folded it.

I have never seen a more immured retreat;
The unbroken hills all round were deeply grown
With ancient forest: one tall peak alone—
San Gabriel's— was far visible above
The girdling heights. It was a place to love;
And in my memory perhaps appears
Yet lovelier than it was: for many years
Are vanished since the kindly man who tilled
In the deep valley that enchanted field,
Told me in homelier, fewer and better words
Than I can use, this tale:
— The fledgling birds
Are flown before we know it (he said); and then
It does no good to wish them home again.
'You'd never think, to see us living here,
Us two alone together, year on year,
We'd had six girls and boys; and every one
Grew up here, and the last of them is gone.
O, they write often:— all but Charles; for he
Has lived too long somewhere beyond the sea,
And maybe has forgotten us. The last
Was Barbara; three years and more are past
Since she was here. For now having a home
And babies of her own, she cannot come
To visit us so often as before.

But we are sorry that we hear no more
Her tame doe in the mountains. Barbara
Was just eighteen when out Dark Canyon way,
At foot of Sister Elsie Peak, I found
A little orphan fawn on the black ground
Under a fernbrake lying. The mother doe
Had been shot by some scoundrel— (for you know
That does are guarded by the forest law)—
And on the low leaves of the ferns I saw
A trail of darkened blood. The fawn was lying
Half-starved, and made a pitiful faint crying
When I came near; and struggled once to rise,
But could not; and it watched me with wild eyes.

I carried it, so light it was and weak,
To a ranch over on Tujunga Creek,
Where they had Jerseys pastured; and it soon
Learned to take milk in dribblets from a spoon.
And though I had to leave it there, in ten
Or eleven days I went for it again
And brought it home. Our Barbara loved it so
That when it grew to be a sleek young doe,
And pined for freedom, round its throat I hung
A small brass cow-bell with a noisy tongue'
To warn the hunters off. It used to roam
The mountains all night long, and yet would come
Home to our cabin often; and it played
With Barbara like a tame lamb unafraid.
I had to fence the garden-patch, and yet
Never could keep it out.

One evening late,
When in the summer heat we'd left our door
Wide open, it stepped in, as oft before,
Jingling its bell. But in the shade without
I saw another one that moved about
Just on the edge of light.

The doe had brought
Her mate avisiting; but quick as thought
When we'd have looked at him the stag was gone.
Then the doe came less often. Very soon

Barbara too had found her mate; and we
Were left here quite alone. I used to see
Sometimes in the early morning Barbara's doe
Along the brookside; but it seemed to know
That Barbara was gone. Its bell would sound;
It would not come; but with a leap and bound
Be off into the forest. Lonely men
Have heard its bell above Pacoima glen;
And summer campers where the West Fork runs
Into San Gabriel River saw it once.
But in the chaparral of Strawberry Peak
It was both seen and heard; and where the creek
Drops down through Devil's Canyon. Bob Devore,
The ranger, was on duty there, before
He went to Foxbrook Flats, and brought us word
In passing. But the pretty sound was heard
No more after a year; we could not tell
Whether the thong had broken and the bell
Been lost among the mountains; or astray
Our daughter's pet had wandered far away.
— We hope it did not come to any harm.

Thus he made end of speech.

Upon his farm
Below the mountain-peak and lofty trees
There breathed, I thought, an air of the innocent peace
That does appear forgotten; but is not
All perished, in a world thus vexed and hot,
And full of stabs unlooked for, and fierce toil.
O traffickers and chiefs, that share the spoil,
And reap wide swaths of glory in far lands,
Having taken up Earth's battles into your hands,—
You also Earth has need of; you requires
Fate, that upon the fume of your desires
Is fed, and waxes mightily:— but yet,
Brief rulers, I would have you not forget
The old dignity of him that drives the plow
Through crumbling furrows deep, when morning's brow
Flames in the orient world; and him that broods
Memory of an old love under the simple woods.

DESCRIPTIVE SONGS AND OTHERS

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A Westward Beach

There is a narrow lonely beach
Beyond the promontory,
And there alone the tall pines reach
To where the surf is hoary
On worn red rocks and ochre sand;
At the starved limits of the land,
Feeling the outer foam, they stand.

Our thrawn peninsular cypresses
Are fitlier formed for striving
With storm and famine and the stress
Of salty vapors driving;
Yet I have never seen them wedge
Their roots—this pine-grove's privilege—
Through wet rocks to the water's edge.
At morn the shadows of the pines
Float on the turbulent water;
But just at sunset the long lines
Of rising breakers scatter
A liquid shade, translucent, dim,
On every lower bough or stem
That in the morning shadowed them.

But when the earnest ecstasy
Of cloudless noon possesses
The cliff, the shore, the prostrate sea,
And with such light oppresses
The world that every form is blent,
And every color, sound, or scent,
Into one ardent element:

Then are these pinetrees great; they stand
Self-authorized, unshifting,
From the lone verge of sea and land
Their sunlit spires uplifting.
They live so hard, they fare so ill,
Their prosperous noontide finds them still
Austere and unsubduable.
Under these pines an autumn day

From dawn to darkness lingering,
The waves above the reefs at play
And in the crannies fingering
I watched, and weighed my narrow sense
With all the mute intelligence
Of natures old, remote, immense.

I cannot pass a dog or horse
Without some form of greeting;
Glance catches glance, as if of course
To celebrate our meeting;
And I am joyful with the birds;
We know each other without words,
Life to life so well accords.

But friendship with the living trees
Is something deeper, rarer;
Word, glance and gesture fail; there is
A subtler message-bearer.
My love beneath the bark can glide
And mix with the green life inside;
And, though deceived, is justified.

Deceived— but how deceived? I know
What I have felt— how often
Have felt the baby branches grow,
The buds unfold and soften,
The eager sap in springtime clear
Whisper below the bark, my ear
Against the wrinkled bark to hear.

Happy whose spirit of wisest thought
Can share the deep emotion
Of woods and hills, whose heart has caught
The rhythm of the infinite ocean,
To whom this earth not alien is,
Who with the stars hath sympathies,—
Happy is he; great joys are his.
And yet, O dear maternal Earth,
A human loving-kindness,
A sympathy with mortal mirth
And tears and wants and blindness;—

Add these, that so thy child may be
Entire, as he is glad and free,—
A poet full-souled and worthy of thee.
He walks obscure; few know, few care

What stone or turf or pillow
Will rest his head to-night; or where.

Below the rolling billow
He might rest well in waters dim,
And sea-flowers twine each passive limb:
Only three hearts would grieve for him.

— And one of them a dog's. But Time
Eternally redresses
With change of rhythm and ranging rhyme,
Life's casual outwardnesses.
He can lift up and he can lower
The worthless world from hour to hour;
Upon the spirit he has no power.

I promise you, serene and great
Ocean, and Earth, my mother,
In days well-friended, fortunate,
My spirit will not be other
Than now it is:— I have fared not ill;
I have known joy: yet keep my will
Austere and unsubduable!

IV

The rock on all this narrow beach
Whereof the pines are wardens
That farthest seaward juts, and which
The deepest foam-flow hardens,—
This reddish-amber sandstone prow
That shears the breakers' landward flow
Is marked with iron upon its brow.

Within the tide's impetuous fling,
Where the worn crag is slanted
Waveward, a rivet and great ring
In living rock are planted.
Their age and use alike unknown;
They are brown with ancient rust, and grown
To be a parcel of the stone.

There clings a thin-worn shell of rock
Two inches up the rivet,
Thwarting the ocean's tempest-shock
By strength the iron can give it.
How old the iron is, who will dare
Guess, seeing how deeply waves could wear
The rock since it was planted there?
Though worn and brown, it still is firm,
Deep-anchored and long stable,
To hold a schooner in a storm
Or tall three-master's cable.
It holds a loop of seaweed brown;
It grows a parcel of the stone;
Nature accepts it for her own.

How it came fresh from human hands,
Black, brilliant from the forges!
But now— no cliff of lonely strands,
No wave that swells and charges,
None of these wind-accepting trees,
Is cleaner of the quaint disease
Of human works and fineries.



Over against the beach of pines
Four island-rocks stand sentry,
And break with sudden spray the lines
Of billows forcing entry
Into the Pescadero cove.
Beyond them darkens, and above,
Point Lobos with his cypress-grove.
One of these rocks is sharp and tall,

And near the base is tunnelled;
At floodtide the waves lash and fall,
Through that arched opening funnelled.
A second one is flat and low,
Yet lifts above the tidal flow
Its surface, white as foam or snow.

White with the droppings of a flock
Of cormorants; daily, yearly,

They stand assembled on this rock
In ordered groups, austerely.
No wing is moved, no neck is bent;
They seem a quiet folk intent
For some miraculous event.

VI

There is no house for miles around;
There is no human chatter;
The waves give tongue, the cliffs resound,
The pines along the water
Murmur together, and on high
Seagulls call and curlews cry,
Wheeling low in vacant sky.
How do I love these voices more,
These cries remote, inhuman,
These echoes of the lonely shore,
Than words of man or woman?
Alas, it is not well with me:—
Can man wash off humanity
And wed the unmarriageable sea?

For miles around there is no house;
Only, between the forelands,
Where those dark-tufted cypress boughs
Are raised above the shorelands,
Remain, like seeds ill planted, bones
Lie buried, the foundation stones
Of that which was a dwelling once.

Three barren fruit-trees long untilled

Wave gladly and weave thicker
Their wasted branches; in the field
A few geraniums flicker,
Lost gleams of wandering red; and here
One rosetree makes one bloom a year,
And drops it where the gardens were.
And these are all. Old silences
That know the sea's voice only
Live now beneath the cypresses
And walk the pathways lonely.
Dear Earth, thou art so beautiful!
Lo, thou acceptest all things dull
And outcast and unusable;

Thou takest home and makest whole
The relics and discarded
Raiment of man; each toy or tool
By him no more regarded
To thee is dear, and grows to thee,
And finds acceptance full and free,
Even with the old hills and the sea.

O men, my brothers! even you
She would accept, unfetter.
Look up into the free and blue:
Have you no dreams of better
And purer lives than those you lead
About the market-place, and feed
With endless labors endless greed?
You are strangers to the earth and sky,
And all their wonders flung you:
Like pence to beggars: you, not I,
Are exiles: from among you
I am gone home: but follow me,
And we might live as brotherly
As the brown hills and the blue sea.

Meanwhile, my voice may reach so far
As to your ears, and waken
Some spark within you, the one star
Your chimneys could not blacken;
And I will plead and I will cry,
And rage at you, and pass you by,
And wander under the open sky.

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Wonder and Joy

The things that one grows tired of— O, be sure
They are only foolish artificial things!
Can a bird ever tire of having wings?
And I, so long as life and sense endure,
(Or brief be they!) shall nevermore inure
My heart to the recurrence of the springs,
Of the gray dawns, the gracious evenings,
The infinite wheeling stars. A wonder pure
Must ever well within me to behold
Venus decline; or great Orion, whose belt
Is studded with three nails of burning gold,
Ascend the winter heaven. Who never felt
This wondering joy may yet be good or great:
But envy him not: he is not fortunate.

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Eucalyptus Trees

THANKFUL, my country, be to him who first
Brought hither from Australia oversea
Sapling or seed of the undeciduous tree
Whose grave and sombre foliage fears no burst
Of heat from summer-naked heavens, nor thirst
Though all the winter is rainless, and the bee
Starves, finding not a blossom. Patiently
The great roots delve, and feel though deep-im-mersed
Some layer of ancient moisture, and the leaves
Perish not, hanging pointed in the sky.
To see these lofty trunks gray-barked and broad
Wall with clear shade a long white southern road
I have been as one devoted, who receives
An impulse or a promise from on high.

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The First Grass

It rained three autumn days; then close to frost
Under clear starlight the night shivering was.
The dawn rose cold and colorless as glass,
And when we wakened rains and clouds were lost.
The ocean surged and shouted stormy-tossed.
I went down to companion him. Alas,
What faint voice by the way? The sudden grass
Cried with thin lips as I the valley crossed,
Saying blade by blade, "Although the warm sweet rain
Awakened us, this world is all too cold.
We never dreamed it thus." — 'Your champion bold
Is risen,' I said; 'he in an hour or twain
Will comfort you.' I passed. Above the dune
Stood the wan splendorless daylight-waning moon.

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When I Behold the Greatest

WHEN I behold the greatest and most wise
Fall out of heaven, wings not by pride struck numb
Like Satan's, but to gain some humbler crumb
Of pittance from penurious granaries;
And when I see under each new disguise
The same cowardice of custom, the same dumb
Devil that drove our Wordsworth to become
Apologist of kings and priests and lies;
And how a man may find in all he loathes
Contentment after all, and so endear it
By cowardly craft it grows his inmost own;—
Then I renew my faith with firmer oaths,
And bind with more tremendous vows a spirit
That, often fallen, never has lain prone.

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Juan Higera Creek

NEITHER your face, Higera, nor your deeds
Are known to me; and death these many years:
Retains you, under grass or forest-mould.
Only a rivulet bears your name: it runs
Deep-hidden in undeciduous redwood shade
And trunks by age made holy, streaming down
A valley of the Santa Lucian hills.
There have I stopped, and though the unclouded sun
Flew high in loftiest heaven, no dapple of light
Flecked the large trunks below the leaves intense,
Nor flickered on your creek: murmuring it sought
The River of the South, which oceanward
Would sweep it down. I drank sweet water there,
And blessed your immortality. Not bronze,
Higera, nor yet marble cool the thirst;
Let bronze and marble of the rich and proud
Secure the names; your monument will last
Longer, of living water forest-pure.

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The Return of Venus

THESE many months half hopelessly
From dune and cliff and shingle
I had watched the shining west, to see
That star which will not mingle
With other stars— the evening one,
The radiant follower of the sun.
Filled full of liquid amber light,
Above the breakers' onset,
Unclouded, vast, serene, to-night
The giant flower of sunset
Unfolded all its purity
And high perfection over me.
The crescent moon but three days old
Upon that airy splendor
Swam like a silver shell.— Behold,
What light more pure, more tender,
If such can be, began to shine
Low down above the ocean-line!

Untwinkling, O how softly pure!
How radiantly tender!
Too lovely for a man to endure:
I thought I would surrender
My very life, my very soul,
For anything so beautiful.

Like one half mad I walked the dune;
I could not watch my footing,
I could not see the crescent moon,
But only Venus floating
Low down, low down. She set too soon;
Then I beheld the little moon.

I stood beside the cove that lies
Below the Promontory.
There shone, there took me by surprise,
The crescent clothed in glory;
Between the cliffbrow and the wave
Shone, like a candle in a cave.

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He Has Fallen in Love with the Mountains

HE HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE

MOUNTAINS

How should he not be blest?
Him the high canyon fountains
 Feed with coolness and rest;
Him the gray mists with pleasure
 About the day's release;
The sleepy long noons with leisure;
 And the eerie dawns with peace.
Remote, steel-gray and scornful
 The peaks; above them glides
Dawn, and purples the mournful
Pines on the canyon sides;
Day, and the ferny fountains
 Are full and crystal-dim;
And he who has loved the mountains,
 How should they not love him?
White be the fair young maiden,
 And comely, without stain,
Her lover sorrow-laden
 Will look to her in vain,
Unhelped; for she is human,
 She will quietly pass by,
Like every other woman
 Who has lived under the sky.

Good be the friend, and grateful
 For kindnesses of old,
Yet will his eyes turn hateful,
F Yet his heart's love burn cold.
Build house-walls of cut clover;
 Lean on a fennel staff;
Put faith in friend or lover,
 And hear the high Fates laugh.

Then to the far hill-ridges
Lift up your eyes, and slake
Your thirst among the sedges
That lock a mountain lake.
Your changed fates bewail not:—
Is mortal guile new-proved?
But the mountains move not, fail not,
Never in vain beloved.

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The Wanderer to His Wine-Cup

Little blue gulf of pleasure
 Shot through with films of red,
 In the old years fallen and dead
 I loved thee out of measure.
 Like mother's milk to me,
 Medicinal and kindly,
 O recklessly and blindly
 I loved and worshipped thee.
 To thee of day and night all
 My hours were given up;
 And sometimes, little cup,
 Betrayal was thy requital.
 I blamed thee not therefor;
 My worship grew more fervent;
 I worthily thy servant
 But loved thee yet the more.
 Severe art thou, not cruel,
 Infinite little god;
 Thou chastenest with a rod
 And crownest with a jewel.
 Not now as once I did
 Do I need thee, O divinest;
 Still like a star thou shinest,
 And let the sun be hid!
 And let the high sun blunder
 ° To the ultimate eclipse,
 And thou with open lips
 Swallow up the wasted thunder.
 Who loves thee on his knees,
 Who worthily thee kisses,
 Shall drink the starry abysses
 And empty the huge seas.

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For a Bridegroom

(To G. F. E.)

I

But only twice or thrice
Between the silver starting-mark
 Of birth, and the strange cavernous goal,
May gleams of our lost Paradise
Revisit through the breathless dark
 That fugitive racer, the swift soul.

Once at a daybreak hour,
When on a child the saffron heaven
 Flows in through jasmine lattices;
Once in full manhood, if the power
We give our lives to gain, is given
 To pay that sad devotedness.
And once when shining wings
Flutter the lintel and the door,
 And love has entered: then rejoice!
The purpose and the hope of things
Appear, and rapturous hours restore
 To the hushed world a human voice.

The rest of happiness
Is peace, the second-best of boons
 A not too hostile Fate will give.
— May that also be yours, nor less
Replenished than the frequent moon's
 Calm light— the equally fugitive.

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Where Shall I Take You To

Were shall I take you to,
Whither shall I fly with you,
Falcon dear, to find a nest?
— Tired are we of the flat and strict:
Take me where tall cliffs are flicked
With spray of the sea's stormiest.
Thither! or else
We two to a blue mountain's crest.

Between the land of great dead queens
And Greece of beauty intervenes
A sea where a thousand islands foam.
— Old olives will stand about our house,
Dwarf cypresses on the cliff's brows,
And vines full-fruited tangle the dome....
Thither! Or else
To the flaming miraculous height, our home.

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The Homely Labors

Nor merely falcon-passions and the sweep
And sealike power of love;
Nor yet alone the dreams that dive hell-deep
Or fly to heaven above;
Nor yet the sense ineffable that springs
When, vast and purified,
On wine-red ocean, with enormous wings
Of cloud fiery and wide,
The day departeth as the Phoenix did,
Through death to dawn returning,
Consumed and incorruptible, and hid
In its own glory and burning;
Nor yet the spiritual agony of light
Innumerable, icy-clear,
When gapes a chasm of cloud at dead of night
And infinite stars appear;—
Not these alone, although no poet's endeavor
Can praise them well enough,
Make splendid our seclusion: but forever
I shall be mindful of
The small and daily tasks, the laying of fire,
The cleaving of fire-wood,
And how much beauty and how sweet desire
And wisdom these include.

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To an Old Square Piano

(Purchased from the caretaker of an estate in Monterey.)

Whose fingers wore your ivory keys
So thin— as tempest and tide-flow
Some pearly shell, the castaway
Of indefatigable seas
On a low shingle far away—
You will not tell, we cannot know.

Only, we know that you are come,
Full of strange ghosts melodious
The old years forget the echoes of,
From the ancient house into our home;
And you will sing of old-world love,
And of ours too, and live with us. '

Sweet sounds will feed you here: our woods
Are vocal with the seawind's breath;
Nor want they wing-borne choristers,
Nor the ocean's organ-interludes.
— Be true beneath her hands, even hers
Who is more to me than life or death.

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Let Us Go Home to Paradise

O my adored!
There are neither flaming sword
Prohibitive, nor angel's eyes
Jealous of our happiness.
O from this valley of distress
Look up, look back, to Paradise!
There gentle mists are drawn along
The margins of the deep,
And up the quiet valley creep.
There the pines with low sweet song
Murmur at morning half asleep,
Trailing through each fingered bough
The gray fog on the hill's brow.

Our beautiful peninsula
Cannot rejoice
For all its forest, and the voice
Of breaking waves in Carmel Bay,
Until we come; the cypresses
Grieve above the dove-gray seas
For us their lovers far away.

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Dream of the Future

To U. J.

Faithful and loved, you know when at first we came
Out of the too-bright land, from a shore without trees,
Though mighty of rocks, and clothed with the same blue wave,—
You know how our hearts were moved at looking down
From the high peninsular yoke; the breath of the morning:
Hung in the pines; and this, we felt, was our home;
This, the narrow bay; the promontories;
The islands, each one rock; the capes beyond,
To the left, of Lobos, and yonder of Pescadero.
We were glad; we had found our place.

May I write for you, dearest,
The dream of a later day? The sun stood then
To the evening-side of our home, and from seaward gazed
Up-stream of the Carmel River; and I was walking
With opposite steps the road of that fair first morn.
I saw, from the yoke peninsular looking down,
Monterey, and the bay that answers to ours,
Though larger. Mightily swept, unbroken, illimitable,
The curve of the northering shore. Was it the sun-rays
Cast from behind me across it that made it so infinite?
Little the town seemed; old is the town, yet it seemed
A temporal accident, somehow dropped in that vastness,
A moment permitted to be; hardly permitted.
The curve of the dunes was immense as the moving ocean;
Thought shrank from before it. How do we dare to live
In so great and tameless a land? We dare; we are here.
Our children, if Destiny guard them, may equal the land.

I pleased myself with the stately towers, the dwellings,
A century hence may witness. Yonder a villa,
All white, cypress-bowered; a cottage here
At the roadside, backed by its ploughland, seeming more firm
In rightful tenure than any tower though the tallest.

Only, O men of the future, I pray you spare
The live-oaks that dot your fields of this eastward, hillside,
The ancient pinewood that crowns your hill with darkness.
Yea, be rulers, but kindly; take toll, but destroy not
With all too heavy exaction your beautiful serfs.

Yet I hold it sure that the hardness of unsubjected,
Unvassalled dominions nerves the heart in a man.
He is the best who unsubduably strives
With unsubduable nature; the happiest he
Who has tribute of water and earth, yet no whole conquest.
I am ill content, I fear the too-greatness of man.
Not uncorrupted the conqueror. Much is lost
When the tame horse runs to the bridle, or the maid to the kiss.

Our children, if Destiny guard them, may find out a land
Greater, more masterless, worthy their mastering strength.
— Where?— When Alaska is peopled, will Venus lack ploughland?
I have dreamed that our children may even ascend to the stars.

O race of men, not to be limited, striving
With strength inexhaustible! Lo, this earth, this globe
Of subduable rock, transnavigable ocean, how long
Will it fix your minds and your hopes, insatiate children?
You have tracked the sky with your engines; on the headland cliffs
Of La Jolla dwelling I watched them; edging the shore,
Higher than falcons, far up over the dawn-mist,
With northward beaks; San Diego had seen them arise.
And over the sky is the ether, the gulf of the planets,
The ocean of stars, the way of the wings of the morn-ing.
Thus did I dream, descending that road which crosses
The wooded peninsular yoke, from bay to bay
Up, and then down; multiform clouds were crossing
From north-east to south-west the sky; a flight of ravens
Drove with the clouds, but more rapidly, motes on the wind.

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The Year of Mourning

In Memory of W. H. J. and M. J.

I

Ocean and solemn pines that made me whole
 With influences benign: a second loss
 Endured has torn my soul
 At the old wound more sorely: oaks, whose moss
 Is wet with winter now, as then it was
 Fresh from the feeding dews and winds of spring,
 Behold what grievous doubling of Alas,
 What twofold suffering
 One dark-starred year may bring!
 Out of bland May the fair and firstling fruit
 Was reft in sudden dark; and now the root
 Is hewn; fallen the strength! We stand no more:
 I stand, though shattered: but that elder strength
 Is fallen, is bruised on dust, is gone far down,
 Far out of reach of sunlight: there nor length
 Of vision, neither power
 Of voices can behold him nor recall.
 The round insensate hopeless world goes on;
 And wars increase; and tumults as before
 Continue; and the stars in time will fall,
 And the sun's light be gone;
 And we ere that conclusion long outworn
 Will have preceased from striving, will have shorn
 The votive lock of hair
 From hope's head to despair
 And life's to death devoted; and the morn
 Have kindled countless fires above a shore
 Vacant of man, a blue sea void of ships,—
 The morn with smiling lips
 Made ruddy by the old rose: but thee nor care
 Of all these things, O Father! thee nor care
 Nor love nor woe can touch forevermore.

II

Where art thou gone that love though mighty is powerless
To follow thee? even ours,
Even thy son's? What region blind and flower-less,
What hopelessness of exile? O, what fire
Has taken hold upon the untimely flowers
That tricked thy bier with weeping and desire
Of white rose-buds in winter— on the wreath
Of oak-leaves bronzed when 'thine were fallen in death—
And on the laurel not unmerited—
And on the calm white face austere— the head
Most beautiful and dead
Whereon my kiss fell vainly, and my tears
Failed as the wave's on the unresponsive stone!
Leavest thou thus alone
Me, after many years?
Me, not to see thee more, never to hear;
Thy grave words, not to watch thy face: I know
That on wide ocean the late winds will blow
And on low lands the spring-wind, and restore
The wild flag and the wanton cowslips clear
In watery places; and the grasses green
On pastured hills serene:
Also the trees that now are bald and frore,
Yea and the undeciduous oaks and pines,
Will take new leaves upon them, yea and the vines:
But thou wilt not return; no more, no more. sans.

III

— What dost thou weeping in the living spring,
Dull chanter of despair?— But what dost thou,
O lying mother, O Earth, because thy brow
With briefest blossoming
Of weeds that cannot live unto the fall
Is star-bedecked, with lies of splendor new?
—I that was old am young.— Is one of all
The same? Of those that blew
Last year is one returned? I know there is none.
— Yet I am here.— Wilt thou outlive the sun,

That perishable star?— Yet I am here.
—Nor is my grief yet perished, nor the urn
Poured empty of its perpetual return
With the reviving year.

IV

I will upon the dead world's vacant frame
Retrace his sacred footsteps reverently,
And dream his life back to the power it was.
O river westward flowing that of thy name
Namest his parent commonwealth: by thee
My years began to be;
And I was born upon thy shore, whenas
Thy shore lay stark below no yeaning moon,
Nor auguries of June;
But toward the dead of January was rolled
The torrent caked with ice and dark with cold
Under thy great-arched bridges, and the walls
And ways with no pure snow from no clear sky
Strown, but with such as falls
In towns, trodden underfoot of passers by.
Unto thy shore though but in vainest dream
Let me at length go home, O westering stream,
And entering at the issued gate, no more
Be anything, as I was naught before.
But from that cloud and breathless past to gaze
Upon his trodden ways—
Let such be my exemption from the lot
Of other souls unborn: yea now, I see
The smaller clearer stream whose pebbly throat
Made music for his boyhood, through such wood
Running, as is no more in all that land.
There with the oak and elm the hawthorn tree,
There with the birch and beech the chestnut stood,
And the tall pine: a thousand where now stand
Not twenty: and the beautiful house-door
Opened for such a brood
As the pure forest and unpopulous earth
Are parents of— the world before this flood

Which ever widening, gulping more and more,
Makes lewd all things, makes common. Such his birth
And boyhood, who before the boyish years
Were past and gone, went forth—so burned the fire
Within him, of desire
To know and conquer. Nay, thou fitful dream, ”
Flee not so fast away to thy compeers!
Stay with me though but little while, and say
What nations in his strong and elder day
He saw and knew: The extreme
Of the dim eastern well-heads of the world
Were given to him with seeing eyes to scan:
The Palestinian hills where that began
Which like strong poison in the sickly world
Works yet for evil and good; medicinal
And deadly: he indeed not wholly pierced
The curtain slack and ceremonial
Of misbelieving priestcraft: nay, he twirled
Himself the loaf, and made it flesh and God
With charms and faith: so mixed with best is worst.
Yet much he knew; he burst
Many strong bonds of folly, and made broad
The beautiful steep highways of the mind.
Say further, O fair dream,
His wanderings: In the mountainous seed-plot
Of freedom and fair thought
And sweet desire of beauty, he inclined
To contemplation his great soul, and walked
In Athens marble-shrined,
And Thebes war-broken, and below the crown
Of old Thaumasius in Arcadia;
And sunward took no unregardful way
To lordly Lacedemon; yea and divine
Eleusis knew; and drank the honeyed wine
Corinthian; and with mountain shepherds talked,
From high Pentelican pastures gazing down
On famous Marathon.
Also Nilotic glories and the waste
Of god-begetting Egypt he beheld;
And that huge oak which ere its boughs were lopped

And all its glorious crown of foliage felled
By northern axemen and the tawny-tressed
Cimmerians and fierce Vandals and the rest,
Had with strong shadow quelled
The ocean-belted orb of lands, and dropped
Sharp javelin-rooted acorns of its power
On British soil and Parthian sand alike,
And from the Iberian shore
To where the extreme Caucasian summits strike
With snowy tops the wombs of crystal snow:
And though the Roman power is dead, of Rome
The term is not yet come:
Nor is there term appointed to my woe:
But thine is fixed, Father, forevermore!

V

Much worthier men than I have made sweet song
Out of a fair friend's death since Bion died.
Moschus and grave-browed Milton:— they were strong
Enough, for aught I know, not to be sorry.
Their friends have mighty memories and shared glory.
Thou more than friend, thou dearer, art denied
All music of lament: thou hast the tones
Of a mere broken sobbing— lo, thy son's.

VI

How do I cry as unto living ears
To him that was my father! All his life
He had the calm of mountains; nor the fears
Shared of this headlong world, nor the blind strife
Was partner of: but where oaks grew, or hills
Raised age-proof heads above the troublous sea,—
There, only there upon this shaken earth,
Were creatures calm as he.
Now all his power is gone; the last of ills
Hath snatched him wholly forth:
His calm, his calm endures eternally.
How do I cry as unto who can hear?

Yea, though he heard me would he answer me,
Though to his soul most dear?

VII

White Alpine summits crowned with snow and peace,
Islanded high above the deadly flood
Of dark and sundering blood,
With you we dwelt in the old fair days when still
Peace lived on earth; and his most reverend head
Lived; and with fruitfulness of high increase—
Whether beneath Geneva's cloudy hill,
Or where more gently swelling, and bespread
With gardens and trim pines
Zuerich's arise about the sapphire lake—
He patient with me planted in my soul
Grave words of elder wisdom, and winged lines
Of deathless verse, the seeds of living fire
Struck from no recent lyre—
Bring back to me, O Alpine mountains bleak,
Those years happy forever, when yet whole
I walked with him, and wept not for his sake,
Ere he my father and the better part
Of this diminished heart
Had entrance to the mountain-cave of death!

— O wanderer, wilt thou always spend thy breath
In vanity of weeping and lament?
Dost thou alone within a world at war,
Alone bewail thy dearest? No new cause
Hast thou: to every man
If so his days be longer than one span
No other grief is sent,
And on his lessened heart no lesser scar
Heals with slow time; to such eternal laws
Let also thine assent.
— Nay, if all share my fates then all men born
Are the more lost, not I the less forlorn.

VIII

O lordly oaks and pines of mine own shore
To you will I returning plain my grief.
Now is full summer bright in all your boughs;
Now is the water dried that wont to pour
Adown the valley brawling; now the brows
Of heaven show gold on azure but no cloud;
Dry are both moss and leaf;
And dry the ferns that grew by the low house.
Thou only at hot noonday speakest loud,
Great ocean; from afar I hear thy voice.
Is it for joy, or dost thou also mourn?
Be still: for I will teach thee how to mourn.
O folly of the heart that will not learn;
What yet it needs must know!
These creatures are too mighty to rejoice,
Too strong to suffer woe.
They live not weakly nor of woman born;
Nor grief's nor pleasure's dire vicissitude
Tempers their loftiest mood.
- Serene are they, yet stern;
And of their natures next to supreme God.

Where on white sand the long waves roll and break
Under the azure fervor of the noon;
Where on gray cliffheads walled of giant stone
The cypresses of the Peninsula
Their bright-green foliage in the westwind shake,
And through gnarled roots feel the impetuous tide
Lash with long foam and jets of whirling spray
Their natal rocks; and where
The Santa Lucian hills their forest-pride
Of northward pines and redwoods in the south
Raise in serenest air;
And where behind its bar the Carmel-mouth
Stagnates at noon of summer, and through sand
Creeps oceanward from reedy pastureland:—
In all these schools have I applied my heart
To wisdom, yea with tears; and lo how small
My learning is; alas, how far apart

From the great wisdom that informs them all!
Natheless have I done well unto this hour;
Nor could I spare one day of all my days
For any worldling's, though with love or praise
Crowned, or with perfumed ease or golden power.

-Yet stand my counsellors dumb before this death;
Or in strange tongues with little hope respond;
Or breathe unwonted scorn.
— Ye doubtless, doubtless ye, the tall pine saith,
Self-moving, intricately made, and formed
From no earth-planted seed but mother-warmed,
And in due season born,
Ye in due season dying, have life beyond.
For us, when the ignorant tempest brings us low,
Or woodsman's iron craft, or crank old age
Ruddying the needles on the barren bough,
Somewhile we lie dead wood in forest-mould;
The elements take us home; the pilgrimage
Begins all new, and there is nothing old.
Leaves none of ours draw back from earth and air
The essence of the beauty that we were.
Ye doubtless— But in scorn the pinetree spoke,
Or thus meseemed. Like answer gave the hills
Santa Lucian, and the rocks and wave.
Yea, even that tended oak,
Which, rooted by the house-door, daily feels—
O love, O weak to help, mighty to weep!—
My presence, and the love that could not save.

IX

Shall I seek darker counsel, shall I take
Resort to such as murmur in the gloom
With tortured Pythian lips familiar names"
And tongues of mortal slumber? Must I fee
That lost king's Endor-witch to answer me?
Gray gossip of the unreverberant tomb,
By thy familiar spirit for my sake
Call him up hither whom my heart reclaims
With anguish and sore yearning!

Yea, the tone
Is nearly his; yea, almost thus he spake.
That lying spirit of thine is keen of wit,
An excellent mime; could well-nigh counterfeit
For very God the cry of his dead son!
Our baser part of consciousness flows over,
And mocks us from without. Thence Gods were made.
Thence to the desolate lover
A phantom of his grief, no holier shade,
Comes in at deep of night through bolted doors;
Ere cockcrow past and gone:
Then, watched through sleep-wet eyelashes, gray dawn:
Stains the far sky and trails with fog the shores.

X

Ocean and shore, grave pines, oaks alway green,
Oaks large-limbed, alway green, and ye not less,
Peninsular cypresses
That nearest overbrow the wave serene,
Ye keep much purer counsel, nor deceive.

You in wet winter the wild storms will rend,
Raging from wave to hill; and through the vale
Like iron-winged vultures toiling, bid you grieve
For leaves disperséd and the wasted year.
But now fair autumn fans you; without fail
The course of spring will cure: but us no end,
No end of woe is meted; us the year
All-grievous strikes; in May the flower first-born,
At the dark solstice fell the father-stem.
And all year through that flood of wrath and fear
Waxes beyond the flowerings of the morn;
That sanguine flood, and fills with death the world.
O rather with those millions, O with them
Much rather would I bleed and perish, hurled
Into the monstrous gape
And ravening maw of war, so thou mightst live!
And she have lived; and thou, O Father, shape
The splendor of her opening youth, and give
Wise counsel and sweet love, as unto me

So unto her, to a much worthier end!

Us evermore, O wood, the stormwinds rend;
You but a narrow season, and soon done.

I will look up unto the holy sun,
The all-visiting light, the cloudless God, and ask
What he has known of whither the dead flee.
Yea, and with sleepless questioning will task
The flaming walls of heaven, the hearthless fires,
The stars for light in this dark mystery.
They know but the one universe; them tires
Not the blind falcon hope, with feverish flight
Forever circling; not the meagre wolf
Of sorrow hunts them down.
They overgaze all gulfs but that one gulf
Obscurest; that alone.
Beyond their witness opens on a night
Awful, discrowned of stars, naked of light.

They age, burn crimson, wane, are blackened out.
Vega from her young glory fiery-wan
Turns; the wroth Bull's red glare, Aldebaran,
Feels coldest ether take him roundabout
With age and slow decay; he wanes content.
New lamps from the Protean element
Blaze forth when these are blackened; these return
No more, no more; they care not though they perish;
Though their companions and their mates die first
No sorrow bids them the less boldly burn.
O fools are we! who cherish
Long loves in such a travelling world, who thirst
For that which the stars know not, which the Gods
Have not: were feigned to have:
That blossom rooted in the bottomless grave,
The impossible dawning of that second morn.

XI

Thus cried the young man, and veiled his brows, and wept.
As lain on ocean-shore the various sand,
Shell-pink and white and purple, nightly swept

By the tide's liquid yet unequal hand,
Shows often a strange hue: like mountain snows
The whole beach gleams at dawn; all porphyryne
Glooms in the morning of the second day;
And, when the moon has waned, like roseate wine
Flows to the wave, as differing winds dispose:
Thus on the singer's voice had sorrow brought
Still various colors upward from his mind.
But now, as when hard northern storms have way
The beach is swept all bare: so further thought
Failed from the broken song.
As rise from wrack of winter sand the blind
Long-buried rocks forth-jutting, and the bones
Of shipwreck from their yearlong shrouding rise,
Thus did his grief rise bare; and in low tones
He sang not but he wept, with veiled eyes
Remembering: long his woe; his memories long.

XII

A year is past, a year is past and gone;
Yea, it is winter now.
On loud-winged southern blasts the rain-clouds blow.
The star-zoned Huntsman opposite the sun
Arises in the evening; all night long
He paces heaven, at dawn he seeks the wave.
The hearths flame up with smoking pitch; the strong
Shag-fetlocked horses tug the winter plough.
The days are clipped and dark; sharp herbage brave
Pricks feebly the hard footprints of the frost.
That day approaches: in the winter thou
Didst leave us; at the solstice thou wast lost.

Lost? No, but we that lost thee, lost are we;
Or lacking strength were so.
Strength needs must have who travels this hard world.
Not lost art thou; thou hast but girded thee
And taken staff in hand, thither to go
Whence thou of old didst come:—
As one comes forth when the east is gray impearled,
And all day laboring in the toilsome field
At evenfall right gladly goeth home.

But thou no more to hill or field returnest;
No second dawn, infinite night is sealed
Over the bed of thy beloved sleep.
Ours in our turn to labor; ours to weep,
Yet sparely now; ours to be strong and earnest,
Kindly and strong as thou; and ours to keep
The ensample of thy life forevermore.
While that remains is all of thine departed?
Can that be lost if we be faithful-hearted?
No wave but makes some record on the shore;
No wind but writes memorial; flesh and breath,
Spirit and flesh as wind and wave are fled;
Not all the man is dead:
His greater soul takes life— yea, even from death.

Behold, the unteachable heart:
Insatiate of its grief yet moans in vain
Being mortal for mortality again;
Wanting the baser, not the better part.
Grieve then, and have enough.
Brim the deep urn, have all thy fill of pain!
Yet he for all thy weeping, all thy love,
All thy long weeping, will not wake again.
He is gone down where Fate and adverse Gods
Trample all things great, all honored things: the plain:
Envies the mountain; Life assenting nods,
And all that power is levelled.— Save be true
The vulgar dreams; or that more lofty and wise
Which from eternal change doth build anew
At long recurrence of the sage's year
All mortal things forever:— little cheer

I find; nothing to fear;
Whether or no this dream be someway true.
This we have known: Virtue and strength and love,
Courage and freedom, do themselves reward;
Life has been good, being hard:
So much we hold for sure; and like enough
Shall know not more, though all be formed anew,
And thou be born again, and all be so
As in old years before;
And thou be taken home from us once more; ~
And we on death-cold ashes falling low
Not weakly mourn thee, not with common woe
Consolable; but such as those have known
Who to their lord with huge unmortared stone
Built great memorials near the Breton shore.

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Song of Quietness

Drink deep, drink deep of quietness,
And on the margins of the sea
Remember not thine old distress
Nor all the miseries to be.
Calmer than mists, and cold
As they, that fold on fold
Up the dim valley are rolled,
Learn thou to be.

The Past— it was a feverish dream,
A drunken slumber full of tears.
The Future— O what wild wings gleam,
Wheeled in the van of desperate years!
Thou lovedst the evening: dawn
Glimmers; the night is gone:—
What dangers lure thee on,
What dreams more fierce?
But meanwhile, now the east is gray,
The hour is pale, the cocks yet dumb,
Be glad before the birth of day,
Take thy brief rest ere morning come:
Here in the beautiful woods
All night the sea-mist floods,—
Thy last of solitudes,
Thy yearlong home.

Iss

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Ode on Human Destinies

I

Here in the beautiful peninsula
Most gladly would I rest, never to be
A wanderer more by land nor weary sea;
Here gladly would I rest, and put away
All hot and vulgar cares,
All foolish-eager dreams, only to see
The yearly blossoming of the stately pines,
And the azure limpid sweet cloud-carrying airs
That bathe the Santa Lucian summit-lines.
Here gladly would I rest, and in high verse—
Whenas that-quickening spirit should have wrought
Into full ripeness the hoarded patient thought—
Of human fates rehearse
Their majesty, that needs nor God nor goal:—
Thus if long time and tranquil were assured:
But in my ears a word
Of sunderance hath been spoken, and I know
How soon the year of quiet will cease to be,
How soon from stormy and fiery years my soul
Yearn back upon her peace of long ago,
This rare tranquillity.
Therefore, albeit from heart and will most pure,
Untimely thoughts, a theme not yet mature
Are mine: but if occasion yield me space
In any future days,
Or truce of storm, I shall not fail to speak
In full what now in strains unworthy and weak,—

And as a messenger whom spears
Menace, in the people's ears
Shouts his word of further war,
News of danger and of hope,
Crying of death and boast of faith:—
As a falcon on the slope
Of the coming storm afar
And wildly driven,
Cries aloud 'twixt earth and heaven
Ere he pass, and down the wind.
Be mingled with the lightning bright and blind.

II

III

I stood upon the Promontory of Stones;
A flashing day in February; an hour
Tumultuous, trembling between sun and shower
And thunder. Like a crystal torrent streamed
The wind against my face; in passionate tones
The ocean spake; the sea-line gleamed;
The wild gulls battled in the seawind's power.
On water-glimmering rocks below, some worn
And iron-bolted beams, a dead ship's bones,
Hung fast but never tranquil. Fast they hung,
Yet heaved they ever and were swung
By the ocean's touch, and soft wet slivers torn
From their hard sides. Northward the clouds were rushing;
White waves above the blackened rocks were gushing;
High on the rapid heads of twisted foam
The seawrack and the bladderwrack upborne
Writhed serpent-fashion, black and brown and green.
And white and black, across the light-blue dome
Of heaven through sudden chasms of cloud far-seen,
Strained broken vapors dizzily; silver-veiled
Quick drifts of rain in dazzling sheen
Adown the Santa Lucian slopes did come.
How many broken rainbows flashed between!
Among the mists they glowed and paled,

Gleamed and vanished: I beheld
Never a single perfect arc.
As Hope's bright pallid angels intervene
Delusive 'twixt the rushing dark
And fitful starts and lights of this our life:
So fragmentary did the rainbows lean
Out of the clouds, and vanish; in the strife
Of winds and vapors o'er the valley-throat
Inwoven they were; they shone, enduring not.
With flecks of rain and spray the wind was rife;
The westering sun's great beams
Waved like a whirling of swords:
Above my head; the world seemed all to float
On thwart and sidelong streams;
As in rain-flooded river-fords
Horse and man and ferry-boat
Toppling I have seen go down,
Horse and oarsman overthrown,
And churning hoofs that struggle in the tawny flood.
— I turned, and climbed a little way, and stood.
Beside that mighty boulder-stone
Which, with its brothers, names the Promontory.
Serene it stands, a child of the Earth's own;
With light-gray lichen old its flanks are hoary;
And such a monument it seems
As primal men laboring in dreams
At Stonehenge raised or near the Breton shore
Unto some God's or mortal chieftain's glory;
But this not human, thence intransitory,
Stands, and the ocean's roar
Shakes it not; from so deep-grown root it springs,
Knit with the Earth's old central stony core.
— Above it flashed the fragmentary bows,
Swept the storm and swooped the wild sea-wings;
It stood in strong repose,
Unmoving evermore.
Thither when I was tired of turbulence
And of the day's and light's impermanence,
The sunderings, the vanishings,
I lifted up my eyes and heart, to adore

'The inveterate stability of things.
'— Toward evening moved the day; the mighty world
Silently eastward whirled;
Above the waves the windy sunset burned.
— Unmoving was that monumental stone?
Unmoved, when all the face of Earth is turned?
— Yea, as to man unmoved.
Ourselves are the only measure of our thought.
How can we know or how acknowledge aught
Except it be our own?
Not the mere bulk of granite is approved
Steadfast; but we have sought
Into the very soul of things, and known
Of our own souls the very steadfastness.

IV

Nothing of man's is strange to man:
Who of old the course began
Runs the course: he finishes.
In the future wild and dim,
Full of wings and fiery-wan,
Many fates and much distress
Multiform, keep watch for him;
The sun will redden, the earth grow strange:
Man will change not, though all Gods
Utterly change.
He will change not, being whole,
Body and sense and breath and soul;
Though his tents of night and daily abodes
Be moved above his mortal head;
Though the Lyre the northern pole,
Vega and the starry Lyre,
Mark; as once the mariner led,
Once of old, his oar and sail
By the faint ethereal fire
Thuban of the Dragon shed.
Sway of the poles will not avail:—
Nay, if the Earth's long-fruitful strength
Be dried, her bosom drained at length

Of seasonable milk, and fail
The pastures of the flocks unfed;
And Man with unreturning course
Into the breathless ether force
His guarded way, and colonize
A later planet,— he shall dread—
Nothing in the infinite skies,
Nothing, knowing from afar
The vapor-girdled Evening Star
Younger sister of his mother,
And her house vine-garlanded
To hail him welcome; and with love
Greet the ten-mooned heavens of Jove,
The old sweet Earth's own elder brother.
''— Far and fearless though the course be sped,
Death, O Man, will reap at last
All the heritage thou hast:
He cannot change thee; and the dead
Stand forever safeguarded
In the chambers of the Past;
As a mighty monarch's gem
So they are watched and held in state,
With a seal upon the gate,
Time, the giant, guarding them.



But we that live, not less are we secure
Than the ancient dead or those of yesterday.
We have nothing to endure
Not from of old determined; nor our feet
Travel in any unpredestined way.
The path of one by waters pale and sweet
Runs, harmless of all frost and fervent heat:
Another's track the eagles gray
Of mountains, and the summits hoar
Witness; on his head are spilled
Icy rains, and eager lightnings gild
The edges of the precipice;
He hears the mountain-torrents roar

Deep under in the vapor-dimmed abyss:—
Let neither tremble, neither falter
In the course he cannot alter;
Each walks a way long chosen, long before;
That path as well as this
In surest guidance is;
Fate, that alone is God, can change no more
Than the strong traveller may control,
His necessary courses toward the timeless goal.

VI;
No wilful rage, nor breach of natural bonds,
Is this that battens with innumerable agonies
Europe's blood-wonted boundaries, not before
Sate;— nor the tumults and the cries
Burdening our wind from eastward are the breath
Of life at length despondent:— who desponds
Knows not the bitter strength that grows at core
Of this old living Earth; he has fed on lies
In time of quiet, therefore now his faith
Fails in the thunderous hour, the harvest-home of death.
Behold, our faith may be as even the Earth's
Unhopeful and firm-rooted.— The man dies?
The race is hardly yeaving yet. The race
At length will perish also? Other births
Even now are quickening in the timeless womb.
Life tortures the old clay to later form;
That least reluctant gulf the eternal tomb
Regorges still his tenants, and the storm
That gluts him is but herald of new games.
Something endures; the universal Power
Endures forever; we, the whiffs and flames
That breathe and flicker for one briefest hour,
We also have our dignity, being part
Of the immortal thing;— we serve our nearest aims:—
The fox goes forth to ravage; the antlered hart
Finds out his richest pasturage; the man
Takes where he may and harvests all he can;
Or mayhap with unreasonable divine
Excesses of desire loves friend or mate

Or form of natural beauty, and fulfils
His nature's need to loveward:— what he wills
Is part and substance of the immense design:
He is beautiful and great,
Being work and will, being child and slave, of constant Fate.

VII

The holy multitude of night,
The innumerable stars, with light
Their beauty, as it were of flowers
The fragrance after sudden showers,
Pour forth immeasurably, and flood
The infinite world; as it were a God
The sun from the orient mountain springs i Into glorious day, with wings
Far-shining; by his lightening shaken
The hills are changed, the forests waken,
Million-waved the ocean dances,
The rocky isles at random sown
Gleam, and the cliffs: the watcher fancies
A spirit flashing from the stone.
A wind is up, and swarming wings
Of gull and tern and sanderlings
Wheel above the whitening waves
That break in spray on cliff and shingle;
Land and ocean lift and mingle
With the sun's ethereal splendor;
On the hill the pinetree waves
Ritual weight of sacred branches,
Wafting fragrance; fair and slender
Flagflowers bloom in purple ranks
In open glades by water banks
Where the doe her fever stanches;
Yellow pansies brown and brightening
From the windy foreland render
To the sun their silent thanks;
The red-shafted woodpecker
Through the upper forest launches
Arrow-flights of ruddy lightning;
Where the streaming billow blanches

Rise the wings; a vapor tender
Rises like a spirit there,
Pearling the pure air.
Mighty Spirit, from the stone
Flashing, from the sea exhaling,
On the azure hill thy garments trailing
Floating in glory from the sun,
Soaring in melody and mirth
From the forest and mild earth;
As lately from thine ancient throne
Of orb on orb of starry flame
Ere the dawn thou lookedst down:—
Have I seen thee, have I known
Thee in all thy forms the same,
Holy Spirit, loveliest one?
Lovely, dear, and terrible,
Have I known thee well?
Beauty is thy human name;
Yet ere the sun had been, thou art;
Time and the outer cold will slay
The currents of his burning heart,
But thou remainest; death will lay
A finger on the race of man
And all our hearts that yearn to thee;
The flame art thou, the fuel are we;
All must end that once began;
The holy stars will cease to be;
But thou art from eternity.
The rhythm of universal things
Art thou: what light is to the sun,
Or swiftness to the swallow's wings,
Or smiting to the wielded sword,
Or thought to man, O loveliest one,
That art thou to eternal Fate.
His spirit thou art, his child, his mate,
His great fulfilment. No mean lord
We serve and share with, serving thee,
O twin-born bride of Destiny!

VIII

The mighty vision vanishes;
The breathing that fulfilled this bruised reed
Fails, the poor stops are faint and whisperless.
They will again awaken, when the need
Is greater, and in greater power will praise
That purest loveliness.
I, driven ahead on undiscovered ways
Yet predetermined, do not fail to see,
Over the fog and dust of dream and deed,
The holy spirit, Beauty, beckoning me.

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BOOK 3 | *TAMAR AND OTHER POEMS*

The complete 1924 Boyle sequence

Tamar

I

A night the half-moon was like a dancing-girl,
No, like a drunkard's last half dollar
Shoved on the polished bar of the eastern hill-range,
Young Cauldwell rode his pony along the sea-cliff;
When she stopped, spurred; when she trembled, drove
The teeth of the little jagged wheels so deep
They tasted blood; the mare with four slim hooves
On a foot of ground pivoted like a top,
Jumped from the crumble of sod, went down, caught, slipped;
Then, the quick frenzy finished, stiffening herself
Slid with her drunken rider down the ledges,
Shot from sheer rock and broke
Her life out on the rounded tidal boulders.

The night you know accepted with no show of emotion the little accident;
grave Orion
Moved northwest from the naked shore, the moon moved to meridian, the
slow pulse of the ocean
Beat, the slow tide came in across the slippery stones; it drowned the dead
mare's muzzle and sluggishly
Felt for the rider; Cauldwell's sleepy soul came back from the blind course
curious to know
What sea-cold fingers tapped the walls of its deserted ruin. Pain, pain and
faintness, crushing
Weights, and a vain desire to vomit, and soon again

The icy fingers, they had crept over the loose hand and lay in the hair now. He
rolled sidewise
Against mountains of weight and for another half hour lay still. With a gush of
liquid noises
The wave covered him head and all, his body
Crawled without consciousness and like a creature with no bones, a seaworm,
lifted its face
Above the sea-wrack of a stone; then a white twilight grew about the moon, and
above
The ancient water, the everlasting repetition of the dawn. You shipwrecked
horseman
So many and still so many and now for you the last. But when it grew daylight
He grew quite conscious; broken ends of bone ground on each other among the
working fibres
While by half inches he was drawing himself out of the sea-wrack up to sandy
granite,
Out of the tide's path. Where the thin ledge tailed into flat cliff he fell asleep....

Far seaward

The daylight moon hung like a slip of cloud against the horizon. The tide was
ebbing
From the dead horse and the black belt of sea-growth. Cauldwell seemed to
have felt her crying beside him,
His mother, who was dead. He thought "If I had a month or two of life yet
I would remember to be decent, only it's now too late, I'm finished, mother,
mother,
I'm sorry." After that he thought only of pain and raging thirst until the
sundown
Reddened the sea, and hands were reaching for him and drawing him up the
cliff.

His sister Tamar

Nursed him in the big westward bedroom
Of the old house on Point Lobos. After fever
A wonderful day of peace and pleasant weakness
Brought home to his heart the beauty of things. "O Tamar
I've thrown away years like rubbish. Listen, Tamar,
It would be better for me to be a cripple,
Sit on the steps and watch the forest grow up the hill
Or a new speck of moss on some old rock
That takes ten years agrowing, than waste

Shame and my spirit on Monterey rye whiskey,
And worse, and worse. I shan't be a cripple, Tamar.
We'll walk along the blessed old gray sea,
And up in the hills and watch the spring come home."

Youth is a troublesome but a magical thing,
There is little more to say for it when you've said
Young bones knit easily; he that fell in December
Walked in the February fields. His sister Tamar
Was with him, and his mind ran on her name,
But she was saying, "We laugh at poor Aunt Stella
With her spirit visitors: Lee, something told her truth.
Last August you were hunting deer, you had been gone
Ten days or twelve, we heard her scream at night,
I went to the room, she told me
She'd seen you lying all bloody on the sea-beach
By a dead deer, its blood dabbling the black weeds of the ebb."
"I was up Tassajara way," he answered,
"Far from the sea." "We were glad when you rode home
Safe, with the two bucks on the packhorse. But listen,
She said she watched the stars flying over you
In her vision, Orion she said, and made me look
Out of her window southward, where I saw
The stars they call the Scorpion, the red bead
With the curling tail. 'Then it will be in winter,'
She whispered to me, 'Orion is winter.'" "Tamar, Tamar,
Winter is over, visions are over and vanished,
The fields are winking full of poppies,
In a week or two I'll fill your arms with shining irises."

The winter sun went under and all that night there came a roaring from the
south; Lee Cauldwell
Lay awake and heard the tough old house creak all her timbers; he was
miserably lonely and vacant,
He'd put away the boyish jets of wickedness, loves with dark eyes in Monterey
back-streets, liquor
And all its fellowship, what was left to live for but the farm-work, rain would
come and hinder?
He heard the cypress trees that seemed to scream in the wind, and felt the ocean
pounding granite.

His father and Tamar's, the old man David Cauldwell, lay in the eastern
chamber; when the storm
Wakened him from the heartless fugitive slumber of age he rose and made a
light, and lighted
The lamp not cold yet; night and day were nearly equal to him, he had seen too
many; he dressed
Slowly and opened his Bible. In the neighboring rooms he heard on one side
Stella Moreland,
His dead wife's sister, quieting his own sister, the idiot Jinny Cauldwell, who
laughed and chuckled
Often for half the night long, an old woman with a child's mind and mostly
sleepless; in the other
Chamber Tamar was moaning, for it seemed that nightmare
Within the house answered to storm without.
To Tamar it seemed that she was walking by the seaside
With her dear brother, who said "Here's where I fell,
A bad girl that I knew in Monterey pushed me over the cliff,
You can see blood still on the boulders." Where he vanished to
She could not tell, nor why she was crying "Lee. No.
No dearest brother, dearest brother no." But she cried vainly,
Lee was not there to help her, a wild white horse
Came out of the wave and trampled her with his hooves,
The horror that she had dreaded through her dreaming
With mystical foreknowledge. When it wakened her,
She like her father heard old Jinny chuckling
And Stella sighing and soothing her, and the southwind
Raging around the gables of the house and through the forest of the cypresses.
"When it rains it will be quieter," Tamar thought. She slept again, all night not
a drop fell.
Old Cauldwell from his window saw the cloudy light seep up the sky from the
overhanging
Hilltops, the dawn was dammed behind the hills but overflowed at last and ran
down on the sea.

II

Lee Cauldwell rode across the roaring southwind to the winter pasture up in
the hills.
A hundred times he wanted Tamar, to show her some new beauty of canyon
wildflowers, water

Dashing its ferns, or oaktrees thrusting elbows at the wind, black-oaks
smouldering with foliage
And the streaked beauty of white-oak trunks, and redwood glens; he rode up
higher across the rainwind
And found his father's cattle in a quiet hollow among the hills, their horns to
the wind,
Quietly grazing. He returned another way, from the headland over Wildcat
Canyon,
Saw the immense water possessing all the west and saw Point Lobos
Gemmed in it, and the barn-roofs and the house-roof
Like ships' keels in the cypress tops, and thought of Tamar.
Toward sundown he approached the house; Will Andrews
Was leaving it and young Cauldwell said, "Listen, Bill Andrews,
We've had gay times together and ridden at night.
I've quit it, I don't want my old friends to visit my sister.
Better keep off the place." "I will," said the other,
"When Tamar tells me to." "You think my bones
Aren't mended yet, better keep off." Lee Cauldwell
Rode by to the stable wondering why his lips
Twitched with such bitter anger; Tamar wondered
Why he went up-stairs without a word or smile
Of pleasure in her. The old man David Cauldwell,
When Lee had told him news of the herd and that Ramon
Seemed faithful, and the calves flourished, the old man answered:
"I hear that there's a dance at Notley's Landing Saturday. You'll be riding
Down the coast, Lee. Don't kill the horse, have a good time." "No, I've had all I
want, I'm staying
At home now, evenings." "Don't do it; better dance your pony down the cliffs
again than close
Young life into a little box; you've been too wild; now I'm worn out, but I
remember
Hell's in the box." Lee answered nothing, his father's lamp of thought was
hidden awhile in words,
An old man's words, like the dry evening moths that choke a candle. A space,
and he was saying,
"Come summer we'll be mixed into the bloody squabble out there, and you'll
be going headforemost
Unless you make your life so pleasant you'd rather live it. I mayn't be living
To see you home or hear you're killed." Lee, smiling at him,
"A soldier's what I won't be, father." That night

He dreamed himself a soldier, an aviator
Duelling with a German above a battle
That looked like waves, he fired his gun and mounted
In steady rhythm; he must have been winged, he suddenly
Plunged and went through the soft and deadly surface
Of the deep sea, wakening in terror.
He heard his old Aunt Jinny chuckling,
Aunt Stella sighing and soothing her, and the southwind
Raging around the gables of the house and through the forest of the cypresses.

III

They two had unbridled the horses
And tied them with long halters near the thicket
Under Mal Paso bridge and wandered east
Into the narrow cleft, they had climbed the summit
On the right and looked across the sea.
The steep path down, "What are we for?" said Tamar wearily, "to want and
want and not dare know it."
"Because I dropped the faded irises," Lee answered, "you're unhappy. They
were all withered, Tamar.
We have grown up in the same house." "The withered house
Of an old man and a withered woman and an idiot woman. No wonder if we go
mad, no wonder."
They came to the hid stream and Tamar said, "Sweet, green and cool,
After the mad white April sun: you wouldn't mind, Lee?
Here where it makes a pool: you mustn't look; but you're my brother. And
then
I will stand guard for you." The murmur and splash of water made his fever
fierier; something
Unfelt before kept his eyes seaward: why should he dread to see the round arm
and clear throat
Flash from the hollow stream? He trembled, thinking "O we are beasts, a beast,
what am I for?
Was the old man right, I must be drunk and a dancer and feed on the cheap
pleasures or it's dangerous?
Lovely and thoughtless, if she knew me how she'd loathe and avoid me. Her
brother, brother. My sister.
Better the life with the bones, and all at once have broken." Meanwhile Tamar
Uneasily dipped her wrists, and crouching in the leaf-grown bank

Saw her breasts in the dark mirror, she trembled backward
From a long ripple and timidly wading entered
The quiet translucence to the thighs. White-shining
Slender and virgin pillar, desire in water
Unhidden and half reflected among the inter-branching ripples,
Arched with alder, over-woven with willow.
Ah Tamar, stricken with strange fever and feeling
Her own desirableness, half innocent Tamar
Thought, "If I saw a snake in the water he would come now
And kill the snake, he is keen and fearless but he fears
Me I believe." Was it the wild rock coast
Of her breeding, and the reckless wind
In the beaten trees and the gaunt booming crashes
Of breakers under the rocks, or rather the amplitude
And wing-subduing immense earth-ending water
That moves all the west taught her this freedom? Ah Tamar,
It was not good, not wise, not safe, not provident,
Not even, for custom creates nature, natural,
Though all other license were; and surely her face
Grew lean and whitened like a mask, the lips
Thinned their rose to a split thread, the little breasts
Erected sharp bright buds but the white belly
Shuddered, sucked in. The lips writhed and no voice
Formed, and again, and a faint cry. "Tamar?"
He answered, and she answered, "Nothing. A snake in the water
Frightened me." And again she called his name.
"What is it, Tamar?" "Nothing. It is cold in the water.
Come, Lee, I have hidden myself all but the head.
Bathe, if you mean to bathe, and keep me company.
I won't look till you're in." He came, trembling.
He unclothed himself in a green depth and dared not
Enter the pool, but stared at the drawn scars
Of the old wound on his leg. "Come, Lee, I'm freezing.
Come, I won't look." He saw the clear-skinned shoulders
And the hollow of her back, he drowned his body
In the watery floor under the cave of foliage,
And heard her sobbing. When she turned, the great blue eyes
Under the auburn hair, streamed. "Lee.
We have stopped being children; I would have drowned myself;
If you hadn't taught me swimming—long ago—long ago, Lee—

When we were children.” “Tamar, what is it, what is it?”
“Only that I want... death. You lie if you think
Another thing.” She slipped face down and lay
In the harmless water, the auburn hair trailed forward
Darkened like weeds, the double arc of the shoulders
Floated, and when he had dragged her to the bank both arms
Clung to him, the white body in a sobbing spasm
Clutched him, he could not disentangle the white desire,
So they were joined (like drowning folk brought back
By force to bitter life) painfully, without joy.
The spasm fulfilled, poor Tamar, like one drowned indeed, lay pale and quiet
And careless of her nakedness. He, gulfs opening
Between the shapes of his thought, desired to rise and leave her and was
ashamed to.
He lay by her side, the cheek he kissed was cold like a smooth stone, the blue
eyes were half open,
The bright smooth body seemed to have suffered pain, not love. One of her
arms crushed both her breasts,
The other lay in the grass, the fingers clutching toward the roots of the soft
grass. “Tamar,”
He whispered, then she breathed shudderingly and answered, “We have it, we
have it. Now I know.
It was my fault. I never shall be ashamed again.” He said, “What shall I do? Go
away?
Kill myself, Tamar?” She contracted all her body and crouched in the long grass,
shivering.
“It hurts, there is blood here, I am too cold to bathe myself again. O brother,
brother,
Mine and twice mine. You knew already, a girl has got to learn. I love you, I
chose my teacher.
Mine, it was my doing.” She flung herself upon him, cold white and smooth,
with sobbing kisses.
“I am so cold, dearest, dearest.” The horses at the canyon mouth tugged at their
halters,
Dug pits under the restless forehooves, shivered in the hill-wind
At sundown, were not ridden till dark, it was near midnight
They came to the old house.

IV

When Jinny Cauldwell slept, the old woman with a child's mind, then Stella
Moreland
Invoked her childish-minded dead, or lying blank-eyed in the dark egged on her
dreams to vision,
Suffering for lack of audience, tasting the ecstasy of vision. This was the
vaporous portion
She endured her life in the strength of, in the sea-shaken loneliness, little loved,
nursing an idiot,
Growing bitterly old among the wind-torn Lobos cypress trunks. (O torture of
needled branches
Doubled and gnarled, never a moment of quiet, the northwind or the
southwind or the northwest.
For up and down the coast they are tall and terrible horsemen on patrol,
alternate giants
Guarding the granite and sand frontiers of the last ocean; but here at Lobos the
winds are torturers,
The old trees endure them. They blew always thwart the old woman's dreams
and sometimes by her bedside
Stood, the south in russet black, the north in white, but the northwest
wave-green, sea-brilliant,
Scaled like a fish. She had also the sun and moon and mightier presences in her
visions.) Tamar
Entered the room toward morning and stood ghost-like among the old
woman's ghosts. The rolled-up eyes,
Dull white, with little spindles of iris touching the upper lids, played back the
girl's blown candle
Sightlessly, but the spirit of sight that the eyes are tools of and it made them,
saw her. "Ah Helen,"
Cried out the entranced lips, "We thought you were tired of the wind, we
thought you never came now.
My sister's husband lies in the next room, go waken him, show him your
beauty, call him with kisses.
He is old and the spittle when he dreams runs into his beard, but he is your
lover and your brother."
"I am not Helen," she said, "what Helen, what Helen?" "Who was not the wife
but the sister of her man,
Mine was his wife." "My mother?" "And now he is an old hulk battered ashore.
Show him your beauty,

Strip for him, Helen, as when he made you a seaweed bed in the cave. What if
the beard is slimy
And the eyes run, men are not always young and fresh like you dead women.”
But Tamar clutching
The plump hand on the coverlet scratched it with her nails, the old woman
groaned but would not waken,
And Tamar held the candle flame against the hand, the soot striped it, then
with a scream
The old woman awoke, sat up, and fell back rigid on the bed. Tamar found
place for the candle
On a little table at the bedside, her freed hands could not awaken a second
answer
In the flesh that now for all its fatness felt like a warmed stone. But the idiot
waked and chuckled,
Waved both hands at the candle saying, “My little star, my little star, come little
star.”
And to these three old Cauldwell sighing with sleeplessness
Entered, not noticed, and he stood in the open door. Tamar was bending
Over the bed, loose hair like burnished metal
Concealed her face and sharply cut across one rounded shoulder
The thin nightdress had slipped from. The old man her father
Feared, for a ghost of law-contemptuous youth
Slid through the chilly vaults of the stiff arteries,
And he said, “What is it, Tamar?” “She was screaming in a dream,
I came to quiet her, now she has gone stiff like iron.
Who is this woman Helen she was dreaming about?”
“Helen? Helen?” he answered slowly and Tamar
Believed she saw the beard and the hands tremble.
“It’s too cold for you, Tamar, go back to bed
And I’ll take care of her. A common name for women.”
Old Jinny clapped her hands, “Little star, little star,
Twinkle all night!” and the stiff form on the bed began to speak,
In a changed voice and from another mode of being
And spirit of thought: “I cannot think that you have forgotten.
I was walking on the far side of the moon,
Whence everything is seen but the earth, and never forgot.
This girl’s desire drew me home, we also had wanted
Too near our blood,
And to tangle the interbranching net of generations
With a knot sideways. Desire’s the arrow-sprayer

And shoots into the stars. Poor little Tamar
He gave you a luckless name in memory of me
And now he is old forgets mine." "You are that Helen,"
Said Tamar leaning over the fat shape
The quiet and fleshless voice seemed issuing from,
A sound of youth from the old puffed lips, "What Helen? This man's...
Sister, this body was saying?" "By as much more
As you are of your brother." "Why," laughed Tamar trembling,
"Hundreds of nasty children do it, and we
Nothing but children." Then the old man: "Lies, lies, lies.
No ghost, a lying old woman. Your Aunt Helen
Died white as snow. She died before your mother died.
Your mother and this old woman always hated her,
This liar, as they hated me. I was too hard a nature
To die of it. Lily and Stella." "It makes me nothing,
My darling sin a shadow and me a doll on wires,"
Thought Tamar with one half her spirit; and the other half said,
"Poor lies, words without meaning. Poor Aunt Stella,
The voices in her have no minds." "Poor little Tamar,"
Murmured the young voice from the swollen cavern,
"Though you are that woman's daughter, if we dead
Could be sorrowful for anyone but ourselves
I would be sorrowful for you, a trap so baited
Was laid to catch you when the world began,
Before the granite foundation. I too have tasted the sweet bait.
But you are the luckier, no one came home to me
To say there are no whips beyond death—but only memory,
And that can be endured." The room was quiet a moment,
And Tamar heard the wind moving out-doors. Then the idiot Jinny Cauldwell
Whose mind had been from birth a crippled bird but when she was twelve years
old her mind's cage
Was covered utterly, like a bird-cage covered with its evening cloth when lamps
are lighted,
And her memory skipped the more than forty years between but caught stray
gleams of the sun of childhood,
She in her crumpled voice: "I'd rather play with Helen, go away Stella. Stella
pinches me,
Lily laughs at me, Lily and Stella are not my sisters." "Jinny, Jinny,"
Said the old man shaking like a thin brick house-wall in an earthquake, "do you
remember, Jinny?"

“Jinny don’t like the old man,” she answered, “give me the star, give me my star,”
She whined, stretching from bed to reach the candle, “why have they taken my little star?
Helen would give it to Jinny.” Then Stella waking from the trance sighed and arose to quiet her
According to her night’s habit. Tamar said, “You were screaming in your sleep.”
“I had great visions.
And I have forgotten them. There Jinny, there, there. It’ll have the candle, will it? Pretty Jinny.
Will have candle to-morrow. Little Jinny let Aunt Stella sleep now.” Old Cauldwell tottering
Went to his room; then Tamar said, “You were talking about his sister Helen, my aunt Helen,
You never told me about her.” “She has been dead for forty years, what should we tell you about her?
Now little Jinny, pretty sister.” And laying her hands upon the mattress of the bed
The old woman cradled it up and down, humming a weary song. Tamar stood vainly waiting
The sleep of the monstrous babe; at length because it would not sleep went to her room and heard it
Gurgle and whimper an hour; and the tired litanies of the lullabies; not quiet till daylight.

V

O swiftness of the swallow and strength
Of the stone shore, brave beauty of falcons,
Beauty of the blue heron that flies
Opposite the color of evening
From the Carmel River’s reed-grown mouth
To her nest in the deep wood of the deer
Cliffs of peninsular granite engirdle,
O beauty of the fountains of the sun
I pray you enter a little chamber,
I have given you bodies, I have made you puppets,
I have made idols for God to enter
And tiny cells to hold your honey.
I have given you a dotard and an idiot,

An old woman puffed with vanity, youth but botched with incest,
O blower of music through the crooked bugles,
You that make signs of sins and choose the lame for angels,
Enter and possess. Being light you have chosen the dark lamps,
A hawk the sluggish bodies: therefore God you chose
Me; and therefore I have made you idols like these idols
To enter and possess.

Tamar, finding no hope,
Slid back on passion, she had sought counsel of the dead
And found half scornful pity and found her sin
Fore-dated; there was honey at least in shame
And secrecy in silence, and her lover
Could meet her afield or slip to her room at night
In serviceable safety. They learned, these two,
Not to look back nor forward; and but for the hint
Of vague and possible wreck every transgression
Paints on the storm-edge of the sky, their blue
Though it dulled a shade with custom shone serene
To the fifth moon, when the moon's mark on women
Died out of Tamar. She kept secret the warning,
How could she color such love with perplexed fear?
Her soul walked back and forth like a new prisoner
Feeling the plant of unescapable fate
Root in her body. There was death; who had entered water
To compass love might enter again to escape
Love's fruit; "But O, but O," she thought, "not to die now.
It is less than half a year
Since life turned sweet. If I knew one of the girls
My lover has known
She'd tell me what to do, how to be fruitless,
How to be... happy? They do it, they do it, all sin
Grew nothing to us that day in Mal Paso water.
A love sterile and sacred as the stars.
I will tell my lover, he will make me safe,
He will find means...
Sterile and sacred, and more than any woman
... Unhappy. Miserable," she sobbed, "miserable,
The rough and bitter water about the cliff's foot
Better to breathe."

When Lee was not by her side
She walked the cliffs to tempt them. The calm and large
Pacific surge heavy with summer rolling southeast from a far origin
Battered to foam among the stumps of granite below.
Tamar watched it swing up the little fjords and fountain
Not angrily in the blowholes; a gray vapor
Breathed up among the buttressed writhings of the cypress trunks
And branches swollen with blood-red lichen. She went home
And her night was full of foolish dreams, two layers of dream, unrelative in
emotion
Or substance to the pain of her thoughts. One, the undercurrent layer that
seemed all night continuous,
Concerned the dead (and rather a vision than a dream, for visions gathered on
that house
Like corposant fire on the hoar mastheads of a ship wandering strange waters),
brown-skinned families
Came down the river and straggled through the wood to the sea, they kindled
fires by knobs of granite
And ate the sea-food that the plow still turns up rotting shells of, not only
around Point Lobos
But north and south wherever the earth breaks off to sea-rock; Tamar saw the
huddled bodies
Squat by the fires and sleep; but when the dawn came there was throbbing
music meant for daylight
And that weak people went where it led them and were nothing; then
Spaniards, priests and horseback soldiers,
Came down the river and wandered through the wood to the sea, and hearing
the universal music
Went where it led them and were nothing; and the English-speakers
Came down the river and wandered through the wood to the sea, among them
Tamar saw her mother
Walking beside a nameless woman with no face nor breasts; and the universal
music
Led them away and they were nothing; but Tamar led her father from that
flood and saved him,
For someone named a church built on a rock, it was beautiful and white, not
fallen to ruin
Like the ruin by Carmel River; she led him to it and made him enter the door,
when he had entered

A new race came from the door and wandered down the river to the sea and to Point Lobos.

This was the undertow of the dream, obscured by a brighter surface layer but seeming senseless.

The tides of the sea were quiet and someone said "because the moon is lost."

Tamar looked up

And the moon dwindled, rocketing off through lonely space, and the people in the moon would perish

Of cold or of a star's fire: then Will Andrews curiously wounded in the face came saying

"Tamar, don't cry. What do you care? I will take care of you." Wakening,

Tamar thought about him

And how he had stopped coming to see her. Perhaps it was another man came through her dream,

The wound in the face disguised him, but that morning Lee having ridden to Mill Creek

To bargain about some fields of winter pasture

Now that the advancing year withered the hill-grass,

Tamar went down and saddled her own pony,

A four-year-old, as white as foam, and cantered

Past San Jose creek-mouth and the Carrows' farm

(Where David Carrow and his fanatical blue eyes,

That afterward saw Christ on the hill, smiled at her passing)

And three miles up the Carmel Valley came

To the Andrews place where the orchards ran to the river

And all the air was rich with ripening apples.

She would not go to the house; she did not find

Whom she was seeking; at length sadly she turned

Homeward, for Lee might be home within two hours,

And on the Carmel bridge above the water

(Shrunk with summer and shot with water lichen,

The surface scaled with minute scarlet leaves,

The borders green with slimy threads) met whom she sought.

"Tamar," he said, "I've been to see you." "You hadn't

For a long time." "I had some trouble with Lee,

I thought you didn't want me." While they talked

Her eyes tasted his face: was it endurable?

Though it lacked the curious gash her dream had given him...

"I didn't want you, you thought?" "Lee said so." "You might have waited

Till Tamar said so." "Well," he answered, "I've been,

And neither of you was home but now I've met you."
—Well-looking enough; freckles, light hair, light eyes;
Not tall, but with a chest and hard wide shoulders,
And sitting the horse well—"O I can do it, I can do it,
Help me God," murmured Tamar in her mind,
"How else—what else can I do?" and said, "Luck, isn't it?
What did you want to see me about?" "I wanted...
Because I... like you, Tamar."—"Why should I be careful,"
She thought, "if I frighten him off what does it matter,
I have got a little beyond caring." "Let's go down
Into the willow," she said, "we needn't be seen
Talking and someone tell him and make trouble
Here on the bridge." They went to the hidden bank
Under the deep green willows, colored water
Stagnated on its moss up to the stems,
Coarse herbage hid the stirrups, Tamar slid from the saddle
As quietly as the long unwhitening wave
Moulds a sunk rock, and while he tethered the horses,
"I have been lonely," she said. "Not for me, Tamar."
"You think not? Will, now that all's over
And likely we'll not see each other again
Often, nor by ourselves, why shouldn't I tell you..."
"What, Tamar?" "There've been moments... hours then...
When anything you might have asked me for
Would have been given, I'd have done anything
You asked me to, you never asked anything, Will.
I'm telling you this so that you may remember me
As one who had courage to speak truth, you'll meet
So many others." "But now"—he meant to ask,
"Now it's too late, Tamar?" and hadn't courage,
And Tamar thought "Must I go farther and say more?
Let him despise me as I despise myself.
I have got a little beyond caring." "Now?" she said.
"Do you think I am changed? You have changed, Will, you have grown
Older, and stronger I think, your face is firmer;
And carefuller: I have not changed, I am still reckless
To my own injury, and as trustful as a child.
Would I be with you here in the green thicket
If I weren't trustful? If you should harm me, Will,
I'd think it was no harm." She had laid her hand

On the round sunburnt throat and felt it throbbing,
And while she spoke the thought ran through her mind,
“He is only a little boy but if he turns pale
I have won perhaps, for white’s the wanting color.
If he reddens I’ve lost and it’s no matter.” He did not move
And seemed not to change color and Tamar said,
“Now I must go. Lee will be home soon.
How soft the ground is in the willow shadow.
I have ended with you honestly, Will; remember me
Not afraid to speak truth and not ashamed
To have stripped my soul naked. You have seen all of me.
Good-bye.” But when she turned he caught her by the arm,
She sickened inward, thinking, “Now it has come.
I have called and called it and I can’t endure it.
Ah. A dumb beast.” But he had found words now and said,
“How would you feel, Tamar, if all of a sudden
The bird or star you’d broken your heart to have
Flew into your hands, then flew away. O Tamar, Tamar,
You can’t go now, you can’t.” She unresisting
Took the hot kisses on her neck and hair
And hung loose in his arms the while he carried her
To a clean bank of grass in the deep shadow.
He laid her there and kneeling by her: “You said you trusted me.
You are wise, Tamar; I love you so much too well
I would cut my hands off not to harm you.” But she,
Driven by the inward spark of life and dreading
Its premature maturity, could not rest
On harmless love, there were no hands to help
In the innocence of love, and like a vision
Came to her the memory of that other lover
And how he had fallen a farther depth
From firmer innocence at Mal Paso, but the stagnant
Autumn water of Carmel stood too far
From the April freshet in the hills. Tamar pushed off
His kisses and stood up weeping and cried
“It’s no use, why will you love me till I cry?
Lee hates you and my father is old and old, we can’t
Sour the three years he has before he dies.”
“I’ll wait for you,” said the boy, “wait years, Tamar.” Then Tamar
Hiding her face against his throat

So that he felt the tears whispered, "But I..."
She sobbed, "Have no patience... I can't wait. Will...
When I made my soul naked for you
There was one spot... a fault... a shame
I was ashamed to uncover." She pressed her mouth
Between the muscles of his breast: "I want you and want you.
You didn't know that a clean girl could want a man.
Now you will take me and use me and throw me away
And I've... earned it." "Tamar, I swear by God
Never to let you be sorry, but protect you
With all my life." "This is our marriage," Tamar answered.
"But God would have been good to me to have killed me
Before I told you." The boy feeling her body
Vibrant and soft and sweet in its weeping surrender
Went blind and could not feel how she hated him
That moment; when he awakened she was lying
With the auburn hair muddied and the white face
Turned up to the willow leaves, her teeth were bared
And sunk in the under lip, a smear of blood
Reddening the corner of the lips. One of her arms
Crushed both her breasts, the other lay in the grass,
The fingers clutching toward the roots of the soft grass. "O Tamar,"
Murmured the boy, "I love you, I love you. What shall I do? Go away?
Kill myself, Tamar?" She contracted all her body and crouched in the long grass,
thinking
"That Helen of my old father's never fooled him at least," and said, "There is
nothing to do, nothing.
It is horribly finished. Keep it secret, keep it secret, Will. I too was to blame a
little.
But I didn't mean... this." "I know," he said, "it was my fault, I would kill
myself, Tamar,
To undo it but I loved you so, Tamar." "Loved? You have hurt me and broken
me, the house is broken
And any thief can enter it." "O Tamar!" "You have broken our crystal
innocence, we can never
Look at each other freely again." "What can I do, Tamar?" "Nothing. I don't
know. Nothing.
Never come to the farm to see me." "Where can I see you, Tamar?" "Lee is
always watching me,

And I believe he'd kill us. Listen, Will. To-morrow night I'll put a lamp in my window,
When all the house is quiet, and if you see it you can climb up by the cypress. I must go home,
Lee will be home. Will, though you've done to me worse than I ever dreamed, I love you, you have my soul,
I am your tame bird now."

VI

This was the high plateau of summer and August waning; white vapors
Breathed up no more from the brown fields nor hung in the hills; daily the insufferable sun
Rose, naked light, and flaming naked through the pale transparent ways of the air drained gray
The strengths of nature; all night the eastwind streamed out of the valley seaward, and the stars blazed.
The year went up to its annual mountain of death, gilded with hateful sunlight, waiting rain.
Stagnant waters decayed, the trickling springs that all the misty-hooded summer had fed
Pendulous green under the granite ocean-cliffs dried and turned foul, the rock-flowers faded,
And Tamar felt in her blood the filth and fever of the season. Walking beside the house-wall
Under her window, she resented sickeningly the wounds in the cypress bark, where Andrews
Climbed to his tryst, disgust at herself choked her, and as a fire by water
Under the fog-bank of the night lines all the sea and sky with fire, so her self-hatred
Reflecting itself abroad burned back against her, all the world growing hateful, both her lovers
Hateful, but the intolerably masculine sun hatefulest of all. The heat of the season
Multiplied centipedes, the black worms that breed under loose rock, they call them thousand-leggers,
They invaded the house, their phalloid bodies cracking underfoot with a bad odor, and dropped
Ceiling to pillow at night, a vile plague though not poisonous. Also the sweet and female sea

Was weak with calm, one heard too clearly a mounting cormorant's wing-claps
half a mile off shore;
The hard and dry and masculine tyrannized for a season. Rain in October or
November
Yearly avenges the balance; Tamar's spirit rebelled too soon, the female fury
abiding
In so beautiful a house of flesh. She came to her aunt the ghost-seer. "Listen to
me, Aunt Stella.
I think I am going mad, I must talk to the dead, Aunt Stella will you help me?"
That old woman
Was happy and proud, no one for years had sought her for her talent. "Dear
Tamar, I will help you.
We must go down into the darkness, Tamar, it is hard and painful for me." "I
am in the darkness
Already, a fiery darkness." "The good spirits will guide you, it is easy for you;
for me, death.
Death Tamar, I have to die to reach them." "Death's no bad thing," she
answered, "each hour of the day
Has more teeth." "Are you so unhappy, Tamar, the good spirits will help you
and teach you." "Aunt Stella,
To-night, to-night?" "I groan when I go down to death, your father and
brother will come and spoil it."
"In the evening we will go under the rocks by the sea." "Well, in the evening."
"If they talk to us
I'll buy you black silk and white lace."
In and out of the little fjord swam the weak waves
Moving their foam in the twilight. Tamar at one flank, old Stella at the other,
upheld poor Jinny
Among the jags of shattered granite, so they came to the shingle. Rich, damp
and dark the sea's breath
Folding them made amend for days of sun-sickness, but Jinny among the
rubble granite
(They had no choice but take her along with them, who else would care for the
idiot?) slipped, and falling
Gashed knees and forehead, and she whimpered quietly in the darkness.
"Here," said Tamar, "I made you
A bed of seaweed under the nose of this old rock, let Jinny lie beside you Aunt
Stella,
I'll lay the rug over you both." They lay on the odorous kelp, Tamar squatted
beside them,

The weak sea wavered in her rocks and Venus hung over the west between the
cliff-butts
Like the last angel of the world, the crystal night deepening. The sea and the
three women
Kept silence, only Tamar moved herself continually on the fret of her taut
nerves,
And the sea moved, on the obscure bed of her eternity, but both were voiceless.
Tamar
Felt her pulse bolt like a scared horse and stumble and stop, for it seemed to her
a wandering power
Essayed her body, something hard and rounded and invisible pressed itself for
entrance
Between the breasts, over the diaphragm. When she was forced backward and
lay panting, the assault
Failed, the presence withdrew, and in that clearance she heard her old Aunt
Stella monotonously muttering
Words with no meaning in them; but the tidal night under the cliff seemed full
of persons
With eyes, although there was no light but the evening planet's and her trail in
the long water.
Then came a man's voice from the woman, saying "Que quieres pobrecita?"
and Tamar, "Morir,"
Trembling, and marvelling that she lied for no reason, and said, "Es porque no
entiendo,
Anything but ingles." To which he answered, "Ah pobrecita," and was silent.
And Tamar
Cried, "I will talk to that Helen." But instead another male throat spoke out of
the woman's
Unintelligible gutturals, and it ceased, and the woman changing voice, yet not
to her own:
"An Indian. He says his people feasted here and sang to their Gods and the tall
Gods came walking
Between the tide-marks on the rocks; he says to strip and dance and he will sing,
and his Gods
Come walking." Tamar answered crying, "I will not, I will not, tell him to go
away and let me
Talk to that Helen." But old Stella after a silence: "He says No, no, the pregnant
women
Would always dance here and the shore belongs to his people's ghosts nor will
they endure another

Unless they are pleased." And Tamar said, "I cannot dance, drive him away,"
but while she said it
Her hands accepting alien life and a strange will undid the fastenings of her
garments.
She panted to control them, tears ran down her cheeks, the male voice chanted
Hoarse discords from the old woman's body, Tamar drew her beauty
Out of its husks; dwellers on eastern shores
Watch moonrises as white as hers
When the half moon about midnight
Steps out of her husk of water to dance in heaven:
So Tamar weeping
Slipped every sheath down to her feet, the spirit of the place
Ruling her, she and the evening star sharing the darkness,
And danced on the naked shore
Where a pale couch of sand covered the rocks,
Danced with slow steps and streaming hair,
Dark and slender
Against the pallid sea-gleam, slender and maidenly
Dancing and weeping...
It seemed to her that all her body
Was touched and troubled with polluting presences
Invisible, and whatever had happened to her from her two lovers
She had been until that hour inviolately a virgin,
Whom now the desires of dead men and dead Gods and a dead tribe
Used for their common prey... dancing and weeping,
Slender and maidenly... The chant was changed,
And Tamar's body responded to the change, her spirit
Wailing within her. She heard the brutal voice
And hated it, she heard old Jinny mimic it
In the cracked childish quaver, but all her body
Obeyed it, wakening into wantonness,
Kindling with lust and wilder
Coarseness of insolent gestures,
The senses cold and averse but the frantic too-governable flesh
Inviting the assaults of whatever desired it, of dead men
Or Gods walking the tide-marks,
The beautiful girlish body as gracile as a maiden's
Gone beastlike, crouching and widening,
Agape to be entered, as the earth
Gapes with harsh heat-cracks, the inland adobe of sun-worn valleys

At the end of summer
Opening sick mouths for its hope of the rain,
So her body gone mad
Invited the spirits of the night, her belly and her breasts
Twisting, her feet dashed with blood where the granite had bruised them,
And she fell, and lay gasping on the sand, on the tide-line. Darkness
Possessed the shore when the evening star was down; old Stella
Was quiet in her trance; old Jinny the idiot clucked and parroted to herself,
 there was none but the idiot
Saw whether a God or a troop of Gods came swaggering along the tide-marks
 unto Tamar, to use her
Shamefully and return from her, gross and replete shadows, swaggering along
 the tide-marks
Against the sea-gleam. After a little the life came back to that fallen flower; for
 fear or feebleness
She crept on hands and knees, returning so to the old medium of this infamy.
 Only
The new tide moved in the night now; Tamar with her back bent like a bow
 and the hair fallen forward
Crouched naked at old Stella's feet, and shortly heard the voice she had cried
 for. "I am your Helen.
I would have wished you choose another place to meet me and milder
 ceremonies to summon me.
We dead have traded power for wisdom yet it is hard for us to wait on the
 maniac living
Patiently, the desires of you wild beasts. You have the power." And Tamar
 murmured, "I had nothing,
Desire nor power." And Helen, "Humbler than you were. She has been
 humbled, my little Tamar.
And not so clean as the first lover left you, Tamar. Another, and half a dozen
 savages,
Dead, and dressed up for Gods." "I have endured it," she answered. Then the
 sweet disdainful voice
In the throat of the old woman: "As for me, I chose rather to die." "How can I
 kill
A dead woman," said Tamar in her heart, not moving the lips, but the other
 listened to thought
And answered "O, we are safe, we shan't fear murder. But, Tamar, the child will
 die, and all for nothing

You were submissive by the river, and lived, and endured fouling. I have heard
the wiser flights
Of better spirits, that beat up to the breast and shoulders of our Father above
the star-fire,
Say, 'Sin never buys anything.'" Tamar, kneeling, drew the thickness of her
draggled hair
Over her face and wept till it seemed heavy with blood; and like a snake lifting
its head
Out of a fire, she lifted up her face after a little and said, "It will live, and my
father's
Bitch be proved a liar." And the voice answered, and the tone of the voice
smiled, "Her words
Rhyme with her dancing. Tamar, did you know there were many of us to watch
the dance you danced there,
And the end of the dance? We on the cliff; your mother, who used to hate me,
was among us, Tamar.
But she and I loved each only one man, though it were the same. We two shared
one? You, Tamar,
Are shared by many." And Tamar: "This is your help, I dug down to you secret
dead people
To help me and so I am helped now. What shall I ask more? How it feels when
the last liquid morsel
Slides from the bone? Or whether you see the worm that burrows up through
the eye-socket, or thrill
To the maggot's music in the tube of a dead ear? You stinking dead. That you
have no shame
Is nothing: I have no shame: see I am naked, and if my thighs were wet with
dead beasts' drippings
I have suffered no pollution like the worms in yours; and if I cannot touch you
I tell you
There are those I can touch. I have smelled fire and tasted fire,
And all these days of horrible sunlight, fire
Hummed in my ears, I have worn fire about me like a cloak and burning for
clothing. It is God
Who is tired of the house that thousand-leggers crawl about in, where an idiot
sleeps beside a ghost-seer,
A doting old man sleeps with dead women and does not know it,
And pointed bones are at the doors
Or climb up trees to the window. I say He has gathered
Fire all about the walls and no one sees it

But I, the old roof is ripe and the rafters
Rotten for burning, and all the woods are nests of horrible things, nothing
would ever clean them
But fire, but I will go to a clean home by the good river." "You danced, Tamar,"
replied
The sweet disdainful voice in the mouth of the old woman, "and now your
song is like your dance,
Modest and sweet. Only you have not said it was you,
Before you came down by the sea to dance,
That lit a candle in your closet and laid
Paper at the foot of the candle. We were watching.
And now the wick is nearly down to the heap,
It's God will have fired the house? But Tamar,
It will not burn. You will have fired it, your brother
Will quench it, I think that God would hardly touch
Anything in that house." "If you know everything,"
Cried Tamar, "tell me where to go.
Now life won't do me and death is shut against me
Because I hate you. O believe me I hate you dead people
More than you dead hate me. Listen to me, Helen.
There is no voice as horrible to me as yours,
And the breasts the worms have worked in. A vicious berry
Grown up out of the graveyard for my poison.
But there is no one in the world as lonely as I,
Betrayed by life and death." Like rain breaking a storm
Sobs broke her voice. Holding by a jag of the cliff
She drew herself full height. God who makes beauty
Disdains no creature, nor despised that wounded
Tired and betrayed body. She in the starlight
And little noises of the rising tide
Naked and not ashamed bore a third part
With the ocean and keen stars in the consistence
And dignity of the world. She was white stone,
Passion and despair and grief had stripped away
Whatever is rounded and approachable
In the body of woman, hers looked hard, long lines
Narrowing down from the shoulder-bones, no appeal,
A weapon and no sheath, fire without fuel,
Saying, "Have you anything more inside you
Old fat and sleepy sepulchre, any more voices?

You can do better than my father's by-play
And the dirty tricks of savages, decenter people
Have died surely. I have so passed nature
That God himself, who's dead or all these devils
Would never have broken hell, might speak out of you
Last season thunder and not scare me." Old Stella
Groaned but not spoke, old Jinny lying beside her
Wakened at the word thunder and suddenly chuckling
Began to mimic a storm, "whoo-whoo" for wind
And "boom-boom-boom" for thunder. Other voices
Wakened far off above the cliff, and suddenly
The farm-bell ringing fire; and on the rock-islets
Sleepy cormorants cried at it. "Why, now He speaks
Another way than out of the fat throat,"
Cried Tamar, and prayed, "O strong and clean and terrible
Spirit and not father punish the hateful house.
Fire eat the walls and roofs, drive the red beast
Through every wormhole of the rotting timbers
And into the woods and into the stable, show them,
These liars, that you are alive." Across her voice
The bell sounded and old Jinny mimicking it,
And shouts above the cliff. "Look, Jinny, look,"
Cried Tamar, "the sky'll be red soon, come and we'll dress
And watch the bonfire." Yet she glanced no thought
At her own mermaid nakedness but gathering
The long black serpents of beached seaweed wove
Wreaths for old Jinny and crowned and wound her. Meanwhile
The bell ceased ringing and Stella ceased her moan,
And in the sudden quietness, "Tamar," she said
In the known voice of Helen so many years
Dead, "though you hate me utterly, Tamar, I
Have nothing to give back, I was quite emptied
Of hate and love and the other fires of the flesh
Before your mother gave the clay to my lover
To mould you a vessel to hold them." Tamar, winding
Her mindless puppet in the sea-slough mesh
Said over her shoulder, hardly turning, "Why then
Do you trouble whom you don't hate?" "Because we hunger
And hunger for life," she answered. "Did I come uncalled?
You called me, you have more hot and blind, wild-blooded

And passionate life than any other creature.
How could I ever leave you while the life lasts?
God pity us both, a cataract life
Dashing itself to pieces in an instant.
You are my happiness, you are my happiness and death eats you.
I'll leave you when you are empty and cold and join us.
Then pity me, then Tamar, me flitting
The chilly and brittle pumice-tips of the moon,
While the second death
Corrodes this shell of me, till it makes my end."
But Tamar would not listen to her, too busily
Decking old Jinny for the festival fire,
And sighing that thin and envious ghost forsook
Her instrument, and about that time harsh pain
Wrung Tamar's loins and belly, and pain and terror
Expelled her passionate fancies, she cried anxiously,
"Stella, Aunt Stella, help me, will you?" and thinking,
"She hears when Jinny whimpers," twistingly pinched
Her puppet's arm until it screamed. Old Stella
Sat up on the seaweed bed and turned white eyes
No pupils broke the diffused star-gleam in
Upon her sixty-year-old babe, that now
Crouched whimpering, huddled under the slippery leaves
And black whips of the beach; and by it stood gleaming
Tamar, anguished, all white as the blank balls
That swept her with no sight but vision: old Stella
Did not awake yet but a voice blew through her,
Not personal like the other, and shook her body
And shook her hands: "It was no good to do too soon, your fire's out, you'd
 been patient for me
It might have saved two fires." But Tamar: "Stella.
I'm dying: or it is dying: wake up Aunt Stella.
O pain, pain, help me." And the voice: "She is mine while I use her. Scream, no
 one will hear but this one
Who has no mind, who has not more help than July rain." And Tamar, "What
 are you, what are you, mocking me?
More dirt and another dead man? O," she moaned, pressing her flanks with
 both her hands, and bending
So that her hair across her knees lay on the rock. It answered, "Not a voice from
 carrion.

Breaker of trees and father of grass, shepherd of clouds and waters, if you had waited for me
You'd be the luckier." "What shall I give you," Tamar cried, "I have given away—" Pain stopped her, and then
Blood ran, and she fell down on the round stones, and felt nor saw nothing. A little later
Old Stella Moreland woke out of her vision, sick and shaking.

Tamar's mind and suffering

Returned to her neither on the sea-rocks of the midnight nor in her own room;
but she was lying
Where Lee her brother had lain, nine months before, after his fall, in the big westward bedroom.
She lay on the bed, and in one corner was a cot for Stella who nursed her, and in the other
A cot for the idiot, whom none else would care for but old Stella. After the ache of awakening
And blank dismay of the spirit come home to a spoiled house, she lay thinking with vacant wonder
That life is always an old story, repeating itself always like the leaves of a tree
Or the lips of an idiot; that herself like Lee her brother
Was picked up bleeding from the sea-boulders under the sea-cliff and carried up to be laid
In the big westward bedroom... was he also fouled with ghosts before they found him, a gang
Of dead men beating him with rotten bones, mouthing his body, piercing him?
"Stella," she whispered,
"Have I been sick long?" "There, sweetheart, lie still; three or four days." "Has Lee been in to see me?"
"Indeed he has, hours every day." "He'll come, then," and she closed her eyes and seemed to sleep.
Someone tapped at the door after an hour and Tamar said, "Come, Lee." But her old father
Came in, and he said nothing but sat down by the bed; Tamar had closed her eyes. In a little
Lee entered, and he brought a chair across the room and sat by the bed. "Why don't you speak,
Lee?" And he said, "What can I say except I love you, sister?" "Why do you call me sister,

Not Tamar?" And he answered, "I love you, Tamar." Then old Aunt Stella said, "See, she's much better.
But you must let her rest. She'll be well in a few days; now kiss her, Lee, and let her rest."
Lee bent above the white pure cameo-face on the white pillow, meaning to kiss the forehead.
But Tamar's hands caught him, her lips reached up for his: while Jinny the idiot clapped and chuckled
And made a clucking noise of kisses; then, while Lee sought to untwine the arms that yoked his neck,
The old man, rising: "I opened the Book last night thinking about the sorrows of this house,
And it said, 'If a man find her in the field and force her and lie with her, nevertheless the damsel
Has not earned death, for she cried out and there was none to save her.' Be glad, Tamar, my sins
Are only visited on my son, for you there is mercy." "David, David
Will you be gone and let her rest now," cried old Stella, "do you mean to kill her with a bible?"
"Woman," he answered, "has God anything to do with you? She will not die, the Book
Opened and said it." Tamar, panting, leaned against the pillow and said, "Go, go. To-morrow
Say all you please; what does it matter?" And the old man said, "Come, Lee, in the morning she will hear us."
Tamar stretched out her trembling hand, Lee did not touch it, but went out ahead of his father.
So they were heard in the hall, and then their foot-steps on the stair. Tamar lay quiet and rigid,
With open eyes and tightening fists, with anger like a coiled steel spring in her throat but weakness
And pain for the lead weights. After an hour she said, "What does he mean to do? Go away?
Kill himself, Stella?" Stella answered, "Nothing, nothing, they talk, it's to keep David quiet.
Your father is off his head a little, you know. Now rest you, little Tamar, smile and be sleepy,
Scold them to-morrow." "Shut the sun out of my eyes then," Tamar said, but the idiot Jinny

Made such a moaning when the windows were all curtained they needed to let
in one beam
For dust to dance in; then the idiot and the sick girl slept. About the hour of
sundown
Tamar was dreaming trivially—an axeman chopping down a tree and field-mice
scampering
Out of the roots—when suddenly like a shift of wind the dream
Changed and grew awful, she watched dark horsemen coming out of the south,
squadrons of hurrying horsemen
Between the hills and the dark sea, helmeted like the soldiers of the war in
France,
Carrying torches. When they passed Mal Paso Creek the columns
Veered, one of the riders said, “Here it began,” but another answered, “No.
Before the granite
Was bedded to build the world on.” So they formed and galloped north again,
hurrying squadrons,
And Tamar thought, “When they come to the Carmel River then it will
happen. They have passed Mal Paso.”

Meanwhile—

Who has ever guessed to what odd ports, what sea buoying the keels, a passion
blows its bulkless
Navies of vision? High up in the hills
Ramon Ramirez, who was herdsman of the Cauldwell herds, stood in his cabin
doorway
Rolling a cigarette a half hour after sundown, and he felt puffs from the south
Come down the slope of stunted redwoods, so he thought the year was turning
at last, and shortly
There would come showers; he walked therefore a hundred yards to westward,
where a point of the hill
Stood over Wildcat Canyon and the sea was visible; he saw Point Lobos
gemmed in the darkening
Pale yellow sea; and on the point the barn-roofs and the house-roof breaking up
through the blackness
Of twilight cypress tops, and over the sea a cloud forming. The evening
darkened. Southwestward
A half mile loop of the coast-road could be seen, this side Mal Paso. Suddenly a
nebular company
Of lights rounded the hill, Ramirez thought the headlights of a car sweeping the
road,

But in a moment saw that it was horsemen, each carrying a light, hurrying
northward,
Moving in squads he judged of twenty or twenty-five, he counted twelve or
thirteen companies
When the brush broke behind him and a horseman rode the headlong ridge like
level ground,
Helmeted, carrying a torch. Followed a squad of twelve, helmeted, cantering
the headlong ridge
Like level ground. He thought in the nervous innocence of the early war, they
must be Germans.

Tamar awoke out of her dream and heard old Jinny saying, "Dear sister Helen,
kiss me
As you kiss David. I was watching under a rock, he took your clothes off and
you kissed him
So hard and hard, I love you too, Helen; you hardly ever kiss me." Tamar lay
rigid,
Breathless to listen to her; it was well known in the house that under the shell of
imbecility
Speech and a spirit however subdued existed still; there were waking flashes,
and more often
She talked in sleep and proved her dreams were made out of clear memories,
childhood sights and girlhood
Fancies, before the shadow had fallen; so Tamar craving food for passion
listened to her,
And heard: "Why are you cross, Helen? I won't peek if you'd rather I didn't.
Darling Helen,
I love him, too; I'd let him play with me the way he does with you if he wanted
to.
And Lily and Stella hate me as much as they hate you." All she said after was so
mumbled
That Tamar could not hear it, could only hear the mumble, and old Aunt
Stella's nasal sleep
And the sea murmuring. When the mumbled voice was quiet it seemed to
Tamar
A strange thing was preparing, an inward pressure
Grew in her throat and seemed to swell her arms and hands
And join itself with a fluid power
Streaming from somewhere in the room—from Jinny?
From Stella?—and in a moment the heavy chair

That Lee had sat in, tipped up, rose from the floor,
And floated to the place he had brought it from
Five hours ago. The power was then relaxed,
And Tamar could breathe and speak. She awaked old Stella
And trembling told her what she had seen; who laughed
And answered vaguely so that Tamar wondered
Whether she was still asleep, and let her burrow
In her bed again and sleep. Later that night
Tamar too slept, but shudderingly, in snatches,
For fear of dreaming. A night like years. In the gray of morning
A horse screamed from the stableyard and Tamar
Heard the thud of hoofs lashing out and timbers
Splintering, and two or three horses broken loose
Galloped about the grounds of the house. She heard men calling,
And down-stairs Lee in a loud angry tone
Saying "Someone's pitched the saw-buck and the woodpile
Into the horse-corral." Then Tamar thought
"The same power moved his chair in the room, my hatred, my hatred,
Disturbing the house because I failed to burn it.
I must be quiet and quiet and quiet and keep
The serving spirits of my hid hatred quiet
Until my time serves too. Helen you shadow
Were never served so handily." Stella had awakened,
And Tamar asking for a drink of water
She waddled to fetch it and met Lee at the door.
"O Lee," she said, "that noise—whatever has happened?"
He: "I don't know. Some fool has pitched the whole woodpile
Into the horse-corral. Is Tamar awake?
I want to see Tamar." He entered the room
As Stella left it. Old withered Aunt Jinny
Sat up in her bed saying "David, David," but Lee
Kneeling at Tamar's bedside, "O Tamar, Tamar.
The old man's out-doors tottering after the horses
So I can see you a minute. O why, why, why,
Didn't you tell me Tamar? I'd have taken you up
In my arms and carried you to the end of the world."
"How it's turned sour," she thought, "I'd have been glad of this
Yesterday," and she clinched her finger-nails
Into her palms under the bed-covers,
Saying, "Tell you—what? What have they told you," she asked

With a white sidelong smile, "people are always lying?"
"Tamar, that you—that we... O I've lived hell
Four or five days now." "You look well enough,"
She answered, "put yours by mine," laying her white, lean,
And somewhat twitching hand on the counterpane,
"Mine used to manage a bridle as well as yours
And now look at them. I don't suppose you want me
Now, but it doesn't matter. You used to come to my bed
With something else than pity, convenient, wasn't it?
Not having to ride to Monterey?" He answered frowning,
"However much you hurt me I am very glad too
That all the joys and memories of a love
As great and as forbidden as ours are nothing to you
Or worse than nothing, because I have to go away,
Two days from now, and stay till the war's over
And you are married and father is dead. I've promised him
Never to see him again, never to see his face.
He didn't ask it because he thinks his Book
Told him I'm to be killed. That's foolishness,
But makes your peace with him and thank God for that.
What his Book told him." "So here's the secret
I wasn't strong enough yesterday to hear.
I thought maybe you meant to kill yourself."
"Thanks, Tamar. The old man thinks I don't need to." "O,
You beast," she said, "you runaway dog.
I wish you joy of your dirty Frenchwomen
You want instead of me. Take it, take it.
Old people in their dotage gabble the truth,
You won't live long." "What can I say, Tamar?
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." "But go away,"
She said, "and if you'll come again to-night
Maybe I'll tell you mine, my secret."

That morning

Ramon Ramirez who watched the Cauldwell cattle
Up in the hills kept thinking of his vision
Of helmets carrying torches; he looked for tracks
On the ridge where he had seen the riders cantering,
And not a bush was broken, not a hoof-mark
Scarred the sear grass. At noon he thought he'd ride

To Vogel's place taking his lunch in the saddle
And tell someone about it. At the gap in the hill
Where storm-killed redwoods line both sides he met
Johnny Cabrera with a flaming bundle
Of dead twigs and dry grass tied with brown cord.
He smelled the smoke and saw the flame sag over
On a little wind from the east, and said in Spanish
"Eh Johnny, are you out of matches?" who answered flashing
His white teeth in a smile, "I'm carrying fire to Lobos
If God is willing," and walked swinging ahead,
Singing to himself the fool south-border couplet
"No tengo tabaco, no tengo papel,
No tengo dinero, God damn it to hell,"
And Ramon called "Hey Johnny," but he would not stop
Nor answer, and thinking life goes wild at times
Ramon came to the hill-slope under Vogel's
And smelled new smoke and saw the clouds go up
And this same Johnny with two other men
Firing the brush to make spring pasture. Ramon
Felt the scalp tighten on his temples and thought best
Not to speak word of either one of his visions,
Though he talked with the men, they told him Tamar Cauldwell
Was sick, and Lee had enlisted.

The afternoon

Was feverish for so temperate a sea-coast
And terribly full of light, the sea like a hard mirror
Reverberated the straight and shining serpents
That fell from heaven and Tamar dreamed in a doze
She was hung naked by that tight cloth bandage
Half way between sea and sky, beaten on by both,
Burning with light; wakening she found she had tumbled
The bed-clothes to the floor and torn her night-gown
To rags, and was alone in the room, and blinded
By the great glare of sun in the western windows.
She rose and shut the curtains though they had told her
She mustn't get out of bed, and finding herself
Able to walk she stood by the little window
That looked southeast from the south bay of the room
And saw the smoke of burning brushwood slopes

Tower up out of the hills in the windless weather
Like an enormous pinetree, "Everybody
But me has luck with fire," she thought to herself,
"But I can walk now," and returned to bed
And drew the sheets over her flanks, but leaving
The breasts and shoulders bare. In half an hour
Stella and old Jinny came into the room
With the old man David Cauldwell. Stella hastily
Drew up the sheet to Tamar's throat but Tamar
Saying, "You left the curtains open and the sun
Has nearly killed me," doubled it down again,
And David Cauldwell, trembling: "Will you attempt
Age and the very grave, uncovering your body
To move the old bones that seventy years have broken
And dance your bosoms at me through a mist of death?
Though I know that you and your brother have utterly despised
The bonds of blood, and daughter and father are no closer bound,
And though this house spits out all goodness, I am old, I am old, I am old,
What do you want of me?" He stood tottering and wept,
Covering his eyes and beard with shaken old hands,
And Tamar, having not moved, "Nothing," she said,
"Nothing, old man. I have swum too deep into the mud
For this to sicken me; and as you say, there are neither
Brother nor sister, daughter nor father, nor any love
This side the doorways of the damnable house.
But I have a wildbeast of a secret hidden
Under the uncovered breast will eat us all up
Before Lee goes." "It is a lie, it is a lie, it is all a lie.
Stella you must go out, go out of the room Stella,
Not to hear the sick and horrible imaginations
A sick girl makes for herself. Go Stella." "Indeed I won't,
David." "You—you—it is still my house." "To let you kill her with bad words
All out of the bible—indeed I won't." "Go, Stella," said Tamar,
"Let me talk to this old man, and see who has suffered
When you come back. I am out of pity, and you and Jinny
Will be less scorched on the other side of the door." After a third refusal
The old woman went, leading her charge, and Tamar: "You thought it was your
house? It is me they obey.
It is mine, I shall destroy it. Poor old man I have earned authority." "You have
gone mad," he answered.

And she: "I'll show you our trouble, you sinned, your old book calls it, and
repented: that was foolish.
I was unluckier, I had no chance to repent, so I learned something, we must
keep sin pure
Or it will poison us, the grain of goodness in a sin is poison. Old man, you have
no conception
Of the freedom of purity. Lock the door, old man, I am telling you a secret."
But he trembling,
"O God thou hast judged her guiltless, the Book of thy word spake it, thou hast
the life of the young man
My son..." and Tamar said, "Tell God we have revoked relationship in the
house, he is not
Your son nor you my father." "Dear God, blot out her words, she has gone
mad. Tamar, I will lock it,
Lest anyone should come and hear you, and I will wrestle for you with God, I
will not go out
Until you are His." He went and turned the key and Tamar said, "I told you I
have authority.
You obey me like the others, we pure have power. Perhaps there are other ways,
but I was plunged
In the dirt of the world to win it, and, O father, so I will call you this last time,
dear father
You cannot think what freedom and what pleasure live in having abjured laws,
in having
Annulled hope, I am now at peace." "There is no peace, there is none, there is
none, there is no peace
But His," he stammered, "but God's." "Not in my arms, old man, on these two
little pillows? Your son
Found it there, and another, and dead men have defiled me. You that are half
dead and half living,
Look, poor old man. That Helen of yours, when you were young, where was
her body more desirable,
Or was she lovinger than I? You know it is forty years ago that we revoked
Relationships in the house." "He never forgives, He never forgives, evil
punishes evil
With the horrible mockery of an echo." "Is the echo louder than the voice, I
have surpassed her,
Yours was the echo, time stands still old man, you'll learn when you have lived
at the muddy root

Under the rock of things; all times are now, to-day plays on last year and the
inch of our future
Made the first morning of the world. You named me for the monument in a
desolate graveyard,
Fool, and I say you were deceived, it was out of me that fire lit you and your
Helen, your body
Joined with your sister's
Only because I was to be named Tamar and to love my brother and my father.
I am the fountain." But he, shuddering, moaned, "You have gone mad, you
have gone mad, Tamar,"
And twisted his old hands muttering, "I fear hell. O Tamar, the nights I have
spent in agony,
Ages of pain, when the eastwind ran like glass under the peeping stars or the
southwest wind
Plowed in the blackness of the trees. You—a little thing has driven you mad, a
moment of suffering,
But I for more than forty years have lain under the mountains and looked down
into hell."
"One word," she said, "that was not written in the book of my fears. I did
indeed fear pain
Before peace found me, or death, never that dream. Old man, to be afraid is the
only hell
And dead people are quit of it, I have talked with the dead." "Have you—with
her?" "Your pitiful Helen?
She is always all about me; if you lay in my arms old man you would be with
her. Look at me,
Have you forgotten—your Helen?" He in torture
Groaned like a beast, but when he approached the bed she laughed, "Not here,
behind you." And he blindly
Clutching at her, she left the coverlet in his hands and slipping free at the other
side
Saw in a mirror on the wall her own bright throat and shoulder and just beyond
them the haggard
Open-mouthed mask, the irreverend beard and blind red eyes. She caught the
mirror from its fastening
And held it to him, reverse. "Here is her picture, Helen's picture, look at her,
why is she always
Crying and crying?" When he turned the frame and looked, then Tamar: "See
that is her lover's.

The hairy and horrible lips to kiss her, the drizzling eyes to eat her beauty,
happiest of women
If only he were faithful; he is too young and wild and lovely, and the lusts of his
youth
Lead him to paw strange beds." The old man turned the glass and gazed at the
blank side, and turned it
Again face towards him, he seemed drinking all the vision in it, and Tamar:
"Helen, Helen,
I know you are here present; was I humbled in the night lately and you exulted?
See here your lover. I think my mother will not envy you now, your lover,
Helen, your lover,
The mouth to kiss you, the hands to fondle secret places." Then the old man
sobbing, "It is not easy
To be old, mocked, and a fool." And Tamar, "What, not yet, you have not gone
mad yet? Look, old fellow.
These rags drop off, the bandages hid something but I'm done with them. See...
I am the fire
Burning the house." "What do you want, what do you want?" he said, and
stumbled toward her, weeping.
"Only to strangle a ghost and to destroy the house. Spit on the memory of that
Helen
You might have anything of me." And he groaning, "When I was young
I thought it was my fault, I am old and know it was hers, night after night, night
after night
I have lain in the dark, Tamar, and cursed her." "And now?" "I hate her,
Tamar." "O," said Tamar gently,
"It is enough, she has heard you. Now unlock the door, old father, and go, and
go." "Your promise,
Tamar, the promise, Tamar." "Why I might do it, I have no feeling of revolt
against it.
Though you have forgotten that fear of hell why should I let you
Be mocked by God?" And he, the stumpage of his teeth knocking together,
"You think, you think
I'll go to the stables and a rope from a rafter
Finish it for you?" "Dear, I am still sick," she answered, "you don't want to kill
me? A man
Can wait three days: men have lived years and years on the mere hope."

Meanwhile the two old women

Sat in their room, old Stella sat at the window looking south into the cypress
boughs, and Jinny
On her bed's edge, rocking her little withered body backward and forward, and
said vacantly,
“Helen, what do you do the times you lock the door to be alone, and Lily and
Stella
Wonder where David's ridden to?” After a while she said again, “Do tell me,
sister Helen,
What you are doing the times you lock the door to be alone, and Lily and Stella
wonder
Where David's ridden to?” And a third time she repeated, “Darling sister
Helen, tell me
What you are doing the times you lock the door to be alone, and Lily and Stella
wonder
Where David's riding?” Stella seemed to awake, catching at breath, and not in
her own voice,
“What does she mean,” she said, “my picture, picture? O! the mirror—I read in
a book Jinny.
A story about lovers; I never had a lover, I read about them;—I won't look,
though.
With all that blind abundance, so much of life and blood, that sweet and
warming blaze of passion,
She has also a monkey in her mind.” “Tell me the story about the picture.”
“Ugh, if she plans
To humble herself utterly... You may peek, Jinny,
Try if you can, shut both eyes, draw them back into your forehead, and look,
look, look
Over the eyebrows, no, like this, higher up, up where the hair grows, now peek
Jinny. Can't you
See through the walls? You can. Look, look, Jinny. As if they'd cut a window. I
used to tell you
That God could see into caves: you are like God now: peek, Jinny.” “I can see
something.
It's in the stable, David's come from Monterey, he's hanging the saddle on a peg
there...”
“Jinny, I shall be angry. That's not David,
It's Lee, don't look into the stable, look into the bedroom, you know, Jinny, the
bedroom,
Where we left Tamar on the bed.” “O that's too near, it hurts me, it hurts my
head, don't scold me, Helen.

How can I see if I'm crying? I see now clearly."
"What do you see?" "I see through walls, O, I'm like God, Helen. I see the
wood and plaster
And see right through them." "What? What are they doing?" "How can you be
there and here, too, Helen?"
"It's Tamar, what is she doing?" "I know it's you Helen, because you have no
hair
Under the arms, I see the blue veins under the arms." "Well, if it's me, what is
she doing?
Is she on the bed? What is she saying?" "She is on fire Helen, she has white fire
all around you
Instead of clothes, and that is why you are laughing with so pale a face." "Does
she let him do
Whatever he wants to, Jinny?" "He says that he hates... somebody... and then
you laughed for he had a rope
Around his throat a moment, the beard stuck out over it." "O Jinny it wasn't I
that laughed,
It was that Tamar, Tamar, Tamar, she has bought him for nothing. She and her
mother both to have him,
The old hollow fool." "What do they want him for, Helen?" "To plug a chink,
to plug a chink, Jinny,
In the horrible vanity of women. Lee's come home, now I could punish her,
she's past hurting,
Are they huddled together Jinny? What, not yet, not yet?" "You asked for the
key but when he held it
You ran away from him." "What do I want, what do I want, it is frightful to be
dead, what do I...
Without power, and no body or face. To kill her, kill her?
There's no hell and curse God for it..."

Lee Cauldwell childishly
Loved hearing the spurs jingle, and because he felt
"After to-morrow I shan't wear them again,
Nor straddle a pony for many a weary month and year,
Maybe forever," he left them at his heels
When he drew off the chaps and hung the saddle
On the oak peg in the stable-wall. He entered the house
Slowly, he had taken five drinks in Monterey
And saw his tragedy of love, sin, and war
At the disinterested romantic angle

Misted with not unpleasing melancholy,
Over with, new adventure ahead, a perilous cruise
On the other ocean, and great play of guns
On the other shore... at the turn of the stair he heard
Hands hammering a locked door, and a voice unknown to him
Crying, "Tamar, I loved you for your flame of passion
And hated you for its deeds, all that we dead
Can love or hate with: and now will you crust flame
With filth, submit? Submit? Tamar,
The defilement of the tideline dead was nothing
To this defilement." Then Lee jingling his spurs,
Jumped four steps to the landing, "Who is there? You,
Aunt Stella?" Old gray Aunt Jinny like a little child
Moaning drew back from him, and the mouth of Stella:
"A man that's ready to cross land and water
To set the world in order can't be expected
To leave his house in order." And Lee, "Listen, Aunt Stella,
Who are you playing, I mean what voice out of the world of the dead
Is speaking from you?" She answered, "Nothing. I was something
Forty years back but now I'm only the bloodhound
To bay at the smell of what they're doing in there."
"Who? Tamar? Blood?" "Too close in blood, I am the blood-stain
On the doorsill of a crime, she does her business
Under her own roof mostly." "Tamar, Tamar,"
Lee called, shaking the door. She from within
Answered "I am here, Lee. Have you said good-bye
To Nita and Conchita in Monterey
And your fat Fanny? But who is the woman at the door
Making the noise?" He said, "Open the door;
Open the door, Tamar." And she, "I opened it for you,
You are going to France to knock at other doors.
I opened it for you and others." "What others?" "Ask her,"
Said the young fierce voice from old Aunt Stella's lips,
"What other now?" "She is alone there," he answered,
"A devil is in you. Tamar," he said, "tell her
You are alone." "No, Lee, I am asking in earnest,
Who is the woman making the noise out there?
Someone you've brought from Monterey? Tell her to go:
Father is here." "Why have you locked it, why have you locked it?"
He felt the door-knob turning in his hand

And the key shook the lock; Tamar stood in the doorway
Wrapped in a loose blue robe that the auburn hair
Burned on, and beyond her the old man knelt by the bed,
His face in the lean twisted hands. "He was praying for me,"
Tamar said quietly. "You are leaving to-morrow,
He has only one child." Then the old man lifting a face
From which the flesh seemed to have fallen, and the eyes
Dropped and been lost: "What will you do to him, Tamar?
Tamar, have mercy.

He was my son, years back." She answered, "I am glad
That you know who has power in the house"; and he
Hid the disfigured face, between his wrists
The beard kept moving, they thought him praying to God.
And Tamar said, "It is coming to the end of the bad story,
That needn't have been bad only we fools
Botch everything, but a dead fool's the worst,
This old man's sister who rackets at the doors
And drove me mad, although she is nothing but a voice,
Dead, shelled, and the shell rotted, but she had to meddle
In the decencies of life here. Lee, if you truly
Lust for the taste of a French woman I'll let you go
For fear you die unsatisfied and plague
Somebody's children with a ghost's hungers
Forty years after death. Do I care, do I care?
You shan't go, Lee. I told the old man I have a secret
That will eat us all up... and then, dead woman,
What will you have to feed on? You spirits flicker out
Too speedily, forty years is a long life for a ghost
And you will only famish a little longer
To whom I'd wish eternity." "O Tamar, Tamar,"
It answered out of Stella's mouth, "has the uttermost
Not taught you anything yet, not even that extinction
Is the only terror?" "You lie too much," she answered,
"You'll enter it soon and not feel any stitch
Of fear afterwards. Listen, Lee, your arms
Were not the first man's to encircle me, and that spilled life
Losing which let me free to laugh at God,
I think you had no share in." He trembled, and said
"O Tamar have your sickness and my crime
Cut you so deep? A lunatic in a dream

Dreams nearer things than this.” “I’d never have told you,”
She answered, “if his vicious anger—after I’d balanced
Between you a long time and then chose you—
Hadn’t followed his love’s old night-way to my window
And kindled fire in the room when I was gone,
The spite-fire that might easily have eaten up
And horribly, our helpless father, or this innocent
Jinny...” “He did it, he did it, forgive me, Tamar.
I thought that you gone mad... Tamar, I know
That you believe what you are saying but I
Do not believe you. There was no one.” “The signal
Was a lamp in the window, perhaps some night
He’d come still if you’d set a lamp into my window.
And when he climbed out of the cypress tree
Then you would know him.” “I would mark him to know.
But it’s not true.” “Since I don’t sleep there now
You might try for the moth; if he doesn’t come
I’ll tell you his name to-morrow.” Then the old man jerking
Like dry bones wired pulled himself half erect
With clutching at the bed-clothes: “Have mercy, Tamar.
Lee, there’s a trick in it, she is a burning fire,
She is packed with death. I have learned her, I have learned her, I have learned
her,
Too cruel to measure strychnine, too cunning-cruel
To snap a gun, aiming ourselves against us.”
Lee answered, “There is almost nothing here to understand.
If we all did wrong why have we all gone mad
But me, I haven’t a touch of it. Listen, dead woman,
Do you feel any light here?” “Fire—as much light
As a bird needs,” the voice from the old woman
Answered, “I am the gull on the butt of the mast
Watching the ship founder, I’ll fly away home
When you go down, or a swallow above a chimney
Watching the brick and mortar fly in the earthquake.”
“I’ll just go look at the young cypress bark
Under her window,” he said, “it might have taken
The bite of a thief’s hob-nails.” When he was gone
And jingling down the stair, then Tamar: “Poor people,
Why do you cry out so? I have three witnesses,
The old man that died to-day, and a dead woman

Forty years dead, and an idiot, and only one of you
Decently quiet. There is the great and quiet water
Reaching to Asia, and in an hour or so
The still stars will show over it but I am quieter
Inside than even the ocean or the stars.
Though I have to kindle paper flares of passion
Sometimes, to fool you with. But I was thinking
Last night, that people all over the world
Are doing much worse and suffering much more than we
This wartime, and the stars don't wink, and the ocean
Storms perhaps less than usual." Then the dead woman,
"Wild life, she has touched the ice-core of things and learned
Something, that frost burns worse than fire." "O, it's not true,"
She answered, "frost is kind; why, almost nothing
You say is true. Helen, do you remember at all
The beauty and strangeness of this place? Old cypresses
The sailor wind works into deep-sea knots
A thousand years; age-reddened granite
That was the world's cradle and crumbles apieces
Now that we're all grown up, breaks out at the roots;
And underneath it the old gray-granite strength
Is neither glad nor sorry to take the seas
Of all the storms forever and stand as firmly
As when the red hawk wings of the first dawn
Streamed up the sky over it: there is one more beautiful thing,
Water that owns the north and west and south
And is all colors and never is all quiet,
And the fogs are its breath and float along the branches of the cypresses.
And I forgot the coals of ruby lichen
That glow in the fog on the old twigs. To live here
Seventy-five years or eighty, and have children,
And watch these things fill up their eyes, would not
Be a bad life... I'd rather be what I am,
Feeling this peace and joy, the fire's joy's burning,
And I have my peace." Then the old man in the dull
And heartless voice answered, "The strangest thing
Is that He never speaks: we know we are damned, why should He speak? The
book
Is written already. Cauldwell, Cauldwell, Cauldwell, Cauldwell.
Eternal death, eternal wrath, eternal torture, eternity, eternity, eternity...

That's after the judgment." "You needn't have any fear, old father,
Of anything to happen after to-morrow," Tamar answered, "we have turned
every page
But the last page, and now our paper's so worn out and tissuey I can read it
already
Right through the leaf, print backwards."

It was twilight in the room, the shiny side of the wheel
Dipping toward Asia; and the year dipping toward winter encrimsoned the
grave spokes of sundown;
And jingling in the door Lee Cauldwell with the day's-death flush upon his
face: "Father:
There are marks on the cypress: a hell of a way to send your soldier off: I want
to talk to her
Alone. You and the women—" he flung his hand out, meaning "go." The old
man without speaking
Moved to the door, propping his weakness on a chair and on the door-frame,
and Lee entering
Passed him and the two women followed him—three, if Stella were one—but
when they had passed the doorway
Old Cauldwell turned, and tottering in it: "Death is the horror," he said,
"nothing else lasts, pain passes,
Death's the only trap. I am much too wise to swing myself in the stable on a
rope from a rafter. Helen, Helen,
You know about death." "It is cold," she answered from the hallway;
"unspeakably hopeless..." "You curse of talkers,
Go," he said, and he shut the door against them and said, "Slut, how many, how
many?" She, laughing,
"I knew you would be sweet to me: I am still sick: did you find marks in the
bark? I am still sick, Lee;
You don't intend killing me?" "Flogging, whipping, whipping, is there
anything male about here
You haven't used yet? Agh you mouth, you open mouth. But I won't touch
you." "Let me say something,"
She answered, standing dark against the west in the window, the death of the
winter rose of evening
Behind her little high-poised head, and threading the brown twilight of the
room with the silver
Exultance of her voice, "My brother can you feel how happy I am but how far
off too?

If I have done wrong it has turned good to me, I could almost be sorry that I
have to die now
Out of such freedom; if I were standing back of the evening crimson on a
mountain in Asia
All the fool shames you can whip up into a filth of words would not be farther
off me,
Nor any fear of anything, if I stood in the evening star and saw this dusty dime's
worth
A dot of light, dropped up the star-gleam. Poor brother, poor brother, you
played the fool too
But not enough, it is not enough to taste delight and passion and disgust and
loathing
And agony, you have to be wide alive, 'an open mouth' you said, all the while,
to reach this heaven
You'll never grow up to. Though it's possible if I'd let you go asoldiering, there
on the dunghills
Of death and fire... ah, you'd taste nothing even there but the officers' orders,
beef and brandy,
And the tired bodies of a few black-eyed French dance-girls: it is better for you
To be lost here than there." "You are up in the evening star," he said, "you can't
feel this," flat-handed
Striking her cheek, "you are up on a mountain in Asia, who made you believe
that you could keep me
Or let me go? I am going to-morrow, to-night I set the house in order." "There
is nothing now
You can be sorry for," she answered, "not even this, it is out of the count, the
cup ran over
Yesterday." He turned and left the room, the foolish tune of the spurs tinkled
Hallway and stair. Tamar, handling the fiery spot upon her cheek smiled in the
darkness,
Feeling so sure of the end. "Night after night he has ridden to the granite at the
rivermouth
And missed my light, to-night he will see it, the Lobos star he called it, and look
and look to be sure
It is not a ship's light nor a star's, there in the south, then he will come, and my
three lovers
Under one roof."

VII

Lee Cauldwell felt his way in the dark among the cypress trees, and turning
At the stable door saw the evening star, he felt for the lantern
Hung on the bent nail to the right of the door,
Lighted it, and in the sweet hay-dusty darkness
Found the black quirt that hung beside the saddle
And seemed a living snake in the hand, then he opened
A locker full of hunter's gear and tumbled
Leather and iron to the floor for an old sheath-knife
Under all the rest; he took the knife and whip
And Tamar in the dark of the westward bedroom heard him
Tinkle on the stair and jingle in the hall, slow steps
Moving to hers, the room that had been her room
Before this illness; she felt him as if she had been there
Lighting her lamp and setting it on the sill,
Then felt him look about the little room and feel it
Breathing and warm with her once habitancy
And the hours of hers and his there, and soften almost
To childish tears at trifles on the wall;
And then he would look at the bed and stiffen
In a brittle rage, feel with thrust under-lip
Virtuous, an outcrop of morality in him
To grow ridiculous and wish to be cruel,
And so return to her. Hastily, without light,
She redded up some of the room's untidiness,
Thrust into the stove the folds of bandage-cloth,
Straightened the bed a little, and laying aside
The loose blue robe lay down in the bed to await him,
Who, throwing open the door, "Tamar: I've got no right
To put my hands into your life, I see
That each of us lives only a little while
And must do what he can with it: so, I'm going
To-night; I'd nearly worked myself to the act
Of some new foolishness: are you there, Tamar?
The lamp?" He struck a match and saw her eyes
Shine on him from the pillow and when the lamp
Was lighted he began again: "It's all such foolishness.
Well, you and I are done. I set your lamp for a signal on the sill,
I'll take it away or help you to that room,

Whichever you like. That'll be my last hand in the game.
It won't take me ten minutes to pack and go, my plan's
Not to risk losing temper and have half decent
Thoughts of you while I'm gone, and you of me, Tamar."
She lay too quietly and the shining eyes
Seemed not to hide amusement, he waited for her
To acknowledge not in direct words perhaps
His generosity, but she silent, "Well, shall I leave the lamp?"
He said, not all so kindly, and Tamar, "I've no one else
If you are going. But if you'd stay I wouldn't
Touch you again, ever. Agh you can't wait
To get to France to crawl into strange beds,
But Monterey to-night. You—what a beast.
You like them dirty." He said, "You're a fool, Tamar.
Well, so I'll leave the lamp. Good-bye, Tamar."
"You said you'd help me down the hall." "Yes, even that.
What must I do, carry you?" "Is the bed together?
See whether there are sheets and covers on it."
He went, and returned icy-pale. "It hasn't been changed
Since I smelled fire and ran into the room
Six or eight days ago. The cupboard door-frame
Is all charcoal. By God, Tamar,
If I believed he'd done it—who is he, Andrews?—
You and your lies have made a horror in the house.
What, shall I go, shall I go?" "Me? who made me
Believe that I could keep you or let you go,
Didn't you say?" "You still believe it," he answered,
Doubling his fists to hold in anger, the passionate need
Of striking her like a torrent in his throat,
"Believe it, fool." "Poor brother. You will never see France,
Never wear uniform nor learn how to fasten
A bayonet to a gun-barrel." "Come. Stop talking.
Get up, come to your room." "Carry me," she answered.
"Though I am not really much too tired to walk.
You used to like me." "Well, to get done and be gone,"
He said, bending above her, she enlaced his neck
Softly and strongly and raised her knees to let
His arm slip under them, he like a man stung by a serpent
Felt weakness and then rage, panted to lift her
And staggered in the doorway and in the dark hallway

Grew dizzy, and difficultly went on and groaning
Dropped her on the bed in her own room, she did not move
To cover herself, then he drawing his palm
Across his forehead found it streaming wet
And said, "You whore, you whore, you whore. Well, you shall have it,
You've earned it," and he twisted himself to the little table
And took the whip, the oiled black supple quirt,
Loaded at the handle, that seemed a living snake in the hand,
And felt the exasperate force of his whole baffled
And blindfold life flow sideways into the shoulder
Swinging it, and half repenting while it dropped
Sickened to see the beautiful bare white
Blemishless body writhe under it before it fell,
The loins pressed into the bed, the breast and head
Twisting erect, and at the noise of the stroke
He made a hoarse cry in his throat but she
Took it silently, and lay still afterward,
Her head so stricken backward that the neck
Seemed strained to breaking, the coppery pad of her hair
Crushed on the shoulder-blades, while that red snake-trail
Swelled visibly from the waist and flank down the left thigh.
"O God, God, God," he groaned; and she, her whole body
Twitching on the white bed whispered between her teeth
"It was in the bargain," and from her bitten lip
A trickle of blood ran down to the pillow.

That one light in the room,
The lamp on the sill, did not turn redder for blood nor with the whip-stripe
But shone serene and innocent up the northward night, writing a long
pale-golden track
In the river's arm of sea, and beyond the river's mouth where the old lion's teeth
of blunted granite
Crop out of the headland young Will Andrews kissed it with his eyes, rode
south and crossed the river's
Late-summer sand-lock. Figures of fire moved in the hills on the left, the
pasture-fires and brush-fires
Men kindle before rain, on a southerly wind the smell of the smoke reached
him, the sea on his right
Breathed; when he skirted the darkness of the gum-tree grove at San Jose
creek-mouth he remembered

Verdugo killed there; Sylvia Vierra and her man had lived in the little
white-washed farm-hut
Under the surf-reverberant blue-gums; two years ago they had had much wine
in the house, their friend
Verdugo came avisting, he being drunk on the raw plenty of wine they thought
abused
Nine-year-old Mary, Sylvia's daughter, they struck him from behind and when
he was down unmanned him
With the kitchen knife, then plotted drunkenly—for he seemed to be
dead—where to dispose the body.
That evening Tamar Cauldwell riding her white pony along the coast-road saw
a great bonfire
Perilling the gum-tree grove, and riding under the smoke met evil odors,
turning in there
Saw by the firelight a man's feet hang out of the fire; then Tamar never having
suffered
Fear in her life, knocked at the hut's door and unanswered entered, and found
the Vierras asleep
Steaming away their wine, but little Mary weeping. She had taken the child and
ridden homeward.
Young Andrews thinking of that idyll of the country gulped at the smoke from
the hills and tethered
His horse in the hiding of a clump of pines, and climbed the line-fence.

Turning a cypress thicket
He saw a figure sway in the starlight, and stood still, breathless. A woman:
Tamar? Not Tamar:
No one he knew: it faced the east gables of the house and seemed twisting its
hands and suddenly
Flung up both arms to its face and passed out of the patch of starlight. The boy,
troubled and cautious,
Turned the other way and circling to the south face of the house peered from
behind the buttressed
Base of a seventy-year-old trunk that yellow light on the other side clothed, and
he saw
A lamp on the table and three people sitting by it; the old man, stiff-jointed as a
corpse,
Grotesquely erect, and old Aunt Stella her lips continually in motion, and old
Jinny

Cross-legg'd having drawn up her ankles into her chair, nodding asleep. At
length Aunt Stella
Ceased talking, none of the three stirred. Young Andrews backed into the wood
and warily finishing
His circuit stood in the darkness under Tamar's window. The strong young tree
to help him to it
Still wore on its boughs her lamplight, then he climbed and set his hands on the
sill, his feet on the ledge
Under it, and Tamar came to the window and took up the lamp to let him
enter. Her face
White in the yellow lamp's glow, with sharp shadows under the eyes and a high
look of joy
He had never seen there frightened him, and she said, "I have been sick, you
know." "I heard," he answered,
"O Tamar, I have been lonely. We must let them know, we can't go on, my
place is with you
When you most need me." "We will tell them to-night," she said, and kissed his
mouth and called, "Lee, Lee,
Come. He has come." "What? Now?" he said. "I have told Lee. I was sick, he
was sorry for me, he is going
To camp to-morrow, he wants to see you and say good-bye." Lee entered while
she spoke and quietly
Held out his hand and Andrews took it. "Talk to each other," Tamar said, "I
am very tired
And must lie down." Lee muttered "She's been awfully sick, it scared us, you
were lucky, Bill Andrews,
Not to be here." "I didn't think so," he answered, "what was it, Lee?" "Well, it's
all over," Lee said
Shifting his feet, "I'm off to-morrow. I'm glad we're friends to say good-bye. Be
good to her, won't you."
And the other, "O God knows I will. All I can do. But of course... Lee... if they
need me
She knows I won't beg off because I'm... married... maybe I'll see you over
there." "O," said Tamar
Laughing, "you too?" and she sat up on the bed saying, "Lee: go and call father
if he's able.
We ought to tell him, he ought to meet my—husband." "I'll see if he can," Lee
answered, "he was unwell
To-day, and if he's in bed..." He left the room, then Tamar: "Look. Bring the
lamp. What Lee did to me."

She opened the blue robe and bared her flank and thigh showing the long
whip-mark. "I have a story.
You must see this to believe it." He turned giddy, the sweet slenderness
Dazzling him, and the lamp shook in his hand, for the sharp spasm of physical
pain one feels
At sight of a wound shot up his entrails. That long welt of red on the tender
flesh, the blood-flecks
And tortured broken little channels of blood crossing it. "Tamar, Tamar!" "Put
down the lamp,
And when they come I'll tell you the story." "What shall I do?" "Why, nothing,
nothing. Poor boy," she said
Pityingly, "I think you are too glad of your life to have come
Into this house, you are not hard enough, you are like my mother, only stone or
fire
Should marry into this house." Then he bewildered looking at the blackened
door-frame, "Why yes,"
Laughed Tamar, "it is here, it has been here, the bridegroom's here already. O
Will I have suffered...
Things I daren't tell." "What do you mean, Tamar?" "Nothing, I mustn't tell
you, you are too high-tempered,
You would do something. Dear, there are things so wicked that nothing you
can do can make them better,
So horrible now they are done that even to touch or try to mend or punish
them is only to widen
Horror: like poking at a corpse in a pool. And father's old and helpless." "Your
father, Tamar?"
"And not to blame. I think he hardly even knew what Lee—" "Lee?" "This
much I'll tell you,
You have to know it... our love, your love and mine, had... fruit, would have
been fruitful, we were going to have
A child, and I was happy and frightened, and it is dead. O God, O God, O God,
I wish
I too had been born too soon and died with the eyes unopened, not a cry,
darkness, darkness,
And to be hidden away. They did it to me; with other abuse, worse violence."
Meanwhile Lee Cauldwell
Finding his father with the two old women in the room down-stairs, "Father,"
he said,
"Tamar was asking for you..." and Helen's voice through old Aunt Stella
answered, "She has enough,

Tell her she has enough.” “Aunt Stella,” he said, “how long will you keep it up?

Our trouble’s clearing,

Let your ghosts be.” “She has you and the other,” she answered, “let me have this one. Are we buzzards to quarrel

Over you dead, we ghosts?” Then Lee turning his shoulder at her, “You must come up, father.

Do you remember the Andrews place that’s up the valley? Young Andrews is up-stairs with Tamar,

He wants to marry her. You know I have to go away to-morrow, remember? and I’ll go happier

To leave her... taken care of. So you’ll see him, father?” “Who is it?” asked the old man. “The bridegroom,”

Said Helen’s voice, “a bridegroom for your Tamar, and the priest will be fire and blood the witness,

And they will live together in a house where the mice are moles.” “Why do you plague me,” he answered

Plaintively, and Lee: “Come, father,” and he lifting his face, “I have prayed to the hills to come and cover me,

We are on the drop-off cliff of the world and dare not meet Him, I with two days to live, even I

Shall watch the ocean boiling and the sea curl up like paper in a fire and the dry bed

Crack to the bottom: I have good news for her, I will see her.” “And I to tell her she may take

Two but not three,” said Helen. “Stay here, stay here, be quiet,” Lee answered angrily, “can I take up

The whole menagerie, raving?” He turned in the door and heard his father move behind him and said,

“If you come up be quiet,” and at the door up-stairs, “Father is tired and sick, he’ll only

Speak to you, Andrews, and must go to bed; he’s worried about my going away to-morrow.

This is Bill Andrews, father.” And Tamar coming to the door, “Let him come in, it’s dark here,

No, bring him in. Father come in. What, shall the men that made your war suck up their millions,

Not I my three?” Then Andrews: “If Tamar is well enough to go to-night I will take her to-night.

You will be well when you are out of this house.” “You hate it still,” said Tamar. “He hates the house,”

She said to Lee, leading his eyes with the significance in hers to the blackened door-frame,
“Well, I will go with you to-morrow.” And Lee, “Listen, Will Andrews, I heard from somebody
You know who set the fire here.” “No, not that,” he answered, “but I know other worse things
That have been done here.” “Fire, fire,” moaned the old man, “the fire of the Lord coming in judgment. Tamar,
It is well with us, be happy, He won’t torture the wicked, He will rub them out and suddenly
With instant fire. We shall be nothing.” “Come, Tamar,” Andrews cried, “to-night. I daren’t leave you.”
“For fear I ask her,” said Lee. “You did it, then. You set the fire.” “No, that’s too idiot
A lie to answer,” he said, “what do I know about your fires? I know something Worse than arson. And saw the horrible new scar of a whip
Not to be paid—this way!” He felt the jerk of his arm striking
And his fist hitting the sharp edge of the jawbone, but yet
When Lee staggered and closed in with a groan,
Clutching him, fumbling for his throat, Will thought “What a fool
To make a nasty show of us before Tamar
And the others, why does he want to fight?” and indignantly
Pushed him off and struck twice, both fists, Lee dropped
And scrambled on hands and knees by the little table.
Then the old man cried, “We shall be nothing, nothing.
O but that’s frightful.”
And Will turning to Tamar saw such hatred
Wrinkle her face he felt a horrible surge
Of nausea in him, then with bare teeth she smiled at him
And he believed the hate was for her brother
And said, “Ah Tamar, come.” Meanwhile the Helen
That spoke out of the lungs and ran in the nerves
Of old Aunt Stella caught the old man David Cauldwell
By the loose flapping sleeve and the lean arm,
Saying in a clotted amorous voice, “Come, David,
My brother, my lover, O honey come, she has no eyes for you,
She feasts on young men. But you to me, to me,
Are as beautiful as when we dared
Desperate pleasure, naked, ages ago,
In the room and by the sea.” “Father,” said Tamar,

"It is only an hour to the end, whom do you want
To-night? Stay here by me." "I was hunting for something," said Lee
Cauldwell,
"Here it is, here it is," and had the sheath-knife bared
And struck up from the floor, rising, the blade
Ripped cloth and skin along his enemy's belly
And the leather belt catching it deflected the point
Into the bowels, Andrews coughed and fell backward
And Lee falling across him stabbed at his throat
But struck too high and opened the right cheek,
The knife scraping on bone and teeth, then Tamar
In a sea-gull voice, "I dreamed it in his face,
I dreamed a T cut in his face—" "You and your dreams
Have done for us," Lee groaned answer. "Akh, all blood, blood.
What did you say to make him hit me?"

Though it is not thought
That the dead intervene between the minds
And deeds of the living, that they are witnesses,
If anything of their spirits with any memory
Survive and not in prison, would seem as likely
As that an exile should look longingly home:
And the mist-face of that mother at the window
Wavering was but a witness, could but watch,
Neither prevent nor cause: no doubt there are many
Such watchers in the world: the same whom Andrews,
Stepping like a thief among the cypress clumps an hour before
Saw twist her hands and suddenly fling up both vaporous arms and sway out of
the starlight,
She now was watching at the down-stairs window
Old Jinny alone in the room, and saw, as the dead see, the thoughts
More clearly than the cloth and skin; the child mind
In that old flesh gathered home on itself
In coils, laboring to warm a memory,
And worked on by an effluence, petulantly pushing away
The easier memories of its open time
Forty years back, power flowing from someone in that house
Belting it in, pressing it to its labor,
Making it shape in itself the memory of to-day's
Vision, the watcher saw it, how could she know it

Or know from whence? a girl naked, no, wrapped in fire,
Filmed in white sheets of fire. "Why, I'm like God,"
Old Jinny had said, "I see through walls," a girl
Naked though clothed in fire, and under the arms
Naked, no hair,— "Ah to be like her, to be like her, probably
Cloth, hair, burned off": displaying herself before a wild old man
Who appeared part of the joy: "Ah to be like her,
Fire is so sweet, they never let me play with it,
No one loves Jinny, wouldn't fire be a father
And hold her in his arms? Fire is so sweet,"
She hovered the hot lamp, "sweet fire, sweet light,"
She held a rag of paper above it, "O dear, dear fire,
Come and kiss Jinny, no one's looking,
Jinny's alone. Dear star, dear light, O lovely fire
Won't you come out, why is it turning black,
Ah come, Ah come, hug Jinny." The hungry beautiful bird
Hopped from its bird-cage to her. "I've got my star,
Ah love, Ah love, and here's more paper
And a little of Jinny's dress, love, lovely light,
Jinny so loves you, Jinny's baby, Jinny's baby,
O," she screamed, "Oo, Oo, Oo," and ran to the window, folded
In a terrible wreath, and at her side the curtains
Danced into flame, and over her head; the gasp
That followed on a cry drew down a sword
Of flame to her lungs, pain ceased, and thinking "Father"
She dropped herself into the arms of the fire,
Huddling under the sill, and her spirit unprisoned
Filled all the room and felt a nuptial joy
In mixing with the bright and eager flame.
While from that blackened morsel on the floor
Fire spread to the wall and gnawed it through, and the window-glass
Crackling and tinkling a rush of south wind fed
The eagerness in the house. They heard up-stairs
That brutal arch of crying, the quick crescendo,
The long drop and the following moan, Will Andrews
Struggled to rise and like a gopher-snake that a child
Has mashed the head of with a stone, he wagged
The blood-clot of his head over the floor
Gulping "You devils, you devils." Lee would have run down
But Tamar clung to him, the old man on his knees

Muttered to God, and old Aunt Stella
In no voice but her own screamed, screamed. Then fire
Was heard roaring, the door leaked threads of smoke,
Lee caught up Tamar in his arms and turned
To the window, the cypress-ladder, but his first step,
Blind, with the burden in his arms, the smoke in his eyes,
Trampled his murdered man on the floor who turning
Caught the other ankle and Lee went down and Tamar
So lovingly wound him that he could not rise
Till the house was full of its bright death; then Tamar:
“I will not let you take me. Go if you want.”
He answered, “You devil, shall I go?” “You wouldn’t stay!
Think of your black-eyed French girls.” “We are on the edge of it,” he answered,
“Tamar, be decent for a minute.” “I have my three lovers
Here in one room, none of them will go out,
How can I help being happy? This old man
Has prayed the end of the world onto us all,
And which of you leaves me?” Then the old man: “O what mountain,
What mountain, what mountain?” And Lee, “Father. The window.
We’ll follow you.” But he kneeling would not rise,
While the house moved and the floor sagged to the south
And old Aunt Stella through the opening door
Ran into the red and black, and did not scream
Any more; then Tamar, “Did you think you would go
Laughing through France?” And the old man, “Fierce, fierce light,
Have pity, Christ have pity, Christ have pity, Christ have pity,
Christ have pity,
Christ have pity...”
And Tamar with her back to the window embraced
Her brother, who struggled toward it, but the floor
Turned like a wheel.

Grass grows where the flame flowered;
A hollowed lawn strewn with a few black stones
And the brick of broken chimneys; all about there
The old trees, some of them scarred with fire, endure the sea-wind.

Publication. *Tamar and Other Poems* (Peter G. Boyle, 1924), in its original sequence.

Provenance. Text checked against the Robinson Jeffers Association’s corrected public-domain 1925 witness; the 2025 textual genealogy establishes the 1924 contents and order.

Gale in April

Intense and terrible beauty, how has our race with the frail naked nerves,
 So little a craft swum down from its far launching?
 Why now, only because the northwest blows and the headed grass billows,
 Great seas jagging the west and on the granite
 Blanching, the vessel is brimmed, this dancing play of the world is too much
 passion.
 A gale in April so overfilling the spirit,
 Though his ribs were thick as the earth's, arches of mountain, how shall one
 dare to live,
 Though his blood were like the earth's rivers and his flesh iron,
 How shall one dare to live? One is born strong, how do the weak endure it?
 The strong lean upon death as on a rock,
 After eighty years there is shelter and the naked nerves shall be covered with
 deep quietness,
 O beauty of things go on, go on, O torture
 Of intense joy I have lasted out my time, I have thanked God and finished,
 Roots of millennial trees fold me in the darkness,
 Northwest wind shake their tops, not to the root, not to the root, I have passed
 From beauty to the other beauty, peace, the night splendor.

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Mal Paso Bridge

Under the lovely Santa Lucian hills
Between the steep-up slopes and storm-piled sea's
Green turbulence I rode northward, beneath
Armies of cloud on the headlands. Garapatas
Passed, over Soberanes Canyon hung
A Sierran condor on spread sails, the storm
Moved him not, the massed body of heaven above him
Moved and he solitary in the great wind
That slighter wings could not endure abode.
Under Mal Paso bridge the long-maned sea-waves
Beat up into the stream, on the other bank
A woman with a little child was standing,
Her daughter three years old, the woman's face
Though it seemed white against the storm was brown,
Her body and face I thought were beautiful,
Her eyes and hair were stormier than the cloud,
I trembled when she turned her eyes upon me.
Turbulent loveliness did you know then,
Or only a fortnight later the full storm
Of male desire? You are the shallow creek-mouth
The surf of all my seas converged upon.
Were I that mountain vulture, solitary
And unmoved under the rush of monstrous heavens,
You would have been the arrow and brought me down.
But when I bought you with a smile and whispers
And secret gifts of wine then the arrow was blunted.

This is the year when young men cannot guess
From night to night what bed they'll sleep in.
But I in yours dark beauty of new desire,
Yours under Santa Lucian hills
Near the rough water; but beyond that nor moon
Nor guess candles the remnant nights.
Therefore I swore to drink wine while I could,
Love where I pleased, and feed my eyes
With Santa Lucian sea-beauty, and moreover
To shear the rhyme-tassels from verse.

No doubt God kept the cows away
To let the grass grow long and dry
Under the white-oak up the canyon.

And frightened with a noise of dogs
Those moonlighters the misty deer,
He made the bed, he kept it sacred.

O keep it hidden and holy still,
Let nothing, bird nor beast nor man,
Touch our joy's chamber under the oaktree.

Iron is the world's want now,
The desire of the nations adventurous iron
Running ahead in the front of the violence,
And war-making steel the hard-visaged adventurer.

Let us give two nights to love
And one to the beautiful goodness of wine,
Stars we will gather you, hills you shall dance with us
To meet the grave brows of the morning high-heartedly.

The war-cruisers well-steerable and steel-belted
Traversing the prone sea
From eloquent round mouths in their mailed towers
Profess a metal language
Beyond the remote horizon ponderously
Significant; the broad storm-cloud
Can kill far off with hazardous quick-flaming
And crooked spears; the Sierras
Have white and roaring lances that they fling
When rose-awakening May
Fondles them, blue-eyed temptress; but I that walk
Ill-armed this dangerous earth
Have only verse, a light weapon, that leaves
In the wound seeds of live fire.

In dream I hunted the latest vessel of the old desire
Across an ancient foreign city
Through coiling streets, a city at war, for every moment
Enemy fire and metal death
Dropped messages from the doubtful twilight; still I sought,
But found not whom I sought, she eluded
Desire and death also. I stood before the sculptured
Gateway of an old dingy house.
My father who is dead stood in the door and beckoned,
And on the granite of the lintel
A serpent dragged its polished body, the color of stone.
... It will be years before I can enter.

Dark pearl, rose of the hills, star of the sea,
Dark star, angel of hell, I am mad for your body,
I am sick for the smell of your hair, I have burning for heart
And the sun for my hatred, and you.

Slim deer grazing at night knew that you lied.
Gray gulls gossip about us, they scream in the fountains
Of the surf, "He believed in her beauty, he is fooled like a boy
Who will spaniel a smile and a braid."

White bird beating between the hilltops
Rises the dawn at the head of the valley,
The hush of the stars.
The redwoods shake their columns of shadow,
Deep in darkness whisper the waters
An adorable word.
Through the cool calm and the secret twilight
Silver-foreheaded, saintly, a maiden,
Wonderfully move
Light, and the waters nightlong wakeful
Whenever we listened, and the sacred hilltops
Whitening in heaven.

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The Coast-Range Christ

I.

Peace O'Farrell, the Carmel farmer's wife, was sorrowful day and night,
 Found no joy in being young and could have wished the yellow hair white.
 What is youth for but to spill it with joy at the altar foot of life?
 What right has a wild old man in the useless beauty of a young wife?
 David Carrow forded the river, a youth with wide and simple eyes,
 To distinguish the strained face, pools in a rock reflecting skies.
 "Are you looking for your father's horses David, that strayed this way?
 Jamie sicked the collie on them to stop them nosing the stacked hay.
 They ran up and crossed the bridge, they'll be at the gate when you get home.
 David you might stay and talk to me for a minute since you've come.
 I'm so lonely these days, Jamie hates me, I'll leave him when I can.
 Christian David, tell me would that be wicked?" "You mustn't rob a man."
 "Rob his hayfield of a squirrel, it's likely he'd mind, he's tired of me now.
 Rob his orchard of a little ripe apple he leaves to rot on the bough."
 "Peace, I'm sorry," David said. Peace watched the muscles in his cheek
 Work, for he felt ashamed; she flung restraint to the wind thinking him weak.
 David drew from her hot arms but the hot soft kiss was like a devil
 Following him across the shoal though he prayed to be delivered from evil;
 Though he'd harder cattle to herd, young men were being conscripted now
 Up to the rage of nations, not for a coward's reason he dared not go;
 Dreamer of mystical brotherhood he had built to music a mountain of faith
 Over desperate Golgotha rock and found a star to follow to death.

II.

Walking in his father's field when shadows grew long and leaned toward night
 David felt the law and prison reach out for him, he prayed for a light.
 Waking in his bed when shadows began to flock to the water side
 David fancied men were come to take him and prayed to Christ his guide.
 "Lord our love and savior lead me, make me worthy to suffer like you
 At men's hands and in their walls, it will be hard, it is little to do.
 But last night when I was walking in the field, and in the night
 While I slept, a voice came and a dream Lord, so I cry for a light.
 For it said to hide in the hills, I thought that it was your voice Dear.
 But to hide seems wrong, I am ready to suffer now, I cannot see clear.
 Then my dream, I stood in the hills, in the deep woods of the hills, I saw

You, Dear, walking on Potrero Hill and wept with wonder and awe.”
David prayed, his own soul crying to him to escape to the hills and hide.
Secretly enthroned his own soul answered the prayer, that God his guide.

III.

Where the Carmel River leans upon its sand-bar in love with the waves,
And the old Franciscan churchyard feels the wild gourd finger its graves
While the weed-roots eat the chalk-stone walls, the O’Farrell farmlands lay.
All the country is shot with the endless treasure-stories of Monterey.
Tales of the lost Spanish mine the Indians know of up in the hill,
Where their forefathers were whipped like cattle, they keep the secret still.
Stories of brigands’ loot and priests’ hoards buried between a night and a day;
Tales of tall ships bulging with sterling silver and mutiny beached in the bay.
Tales that focussed on O’Farrell’s own farmland, the core of the coast domain
Granted the mendicants of St. Francis by the majesty of Spain.
In O’Farrell’s potato-field the plow-iron yielded convert bones,
Though his mole-plow never had cut to treasure, but the farmer had once
Saved a grizzled Indian’s life when the river was up and his horse went down,
Hauled him through the tawny freshet tearing the alders tempest-blown.
With no word of thanks the old man went dripping up hill and disappeared;
Ten days later he returned and squatted all day in the stable yard,
Slept in the loft straw at night and in the morning said he’d bid
Silver for life: when the priests were hunted out of the Mission church they hid
Deep their hoard, O’Farrell dig here and find old silver as cheap as salt,
Candlesticks and cups and ingots rocked-in at night in the rich vault.
No, he had better work to mind, the winter plows and the summer reaping;
But years after, an autumn evening while he lay between waking and sleeping
Came a voice on the valley wind “O’Farrell dig here.” He smiled and slept.
In a dream his mother came, her hair was earthy and wet and she wept.
There was silver at her throat, earth-tarnished now for thirty years.
When he waked he thought it wise to dig, he was so moved by her tears.
At twelve feet he tapped a tunnel underground but it led to nothing.
Nearer to the river he sunk another shaft, with longing and loathing.
Not for need of the white metal, the plows were turning up gold that year,
He was longing to withdraw from concealment... to lift into the air...
Something... that white child of the earth... to violate the secrets of earth.
Said he was digging a new well, blasphemed when water bubbled forth.
Toiled with long forgotten hankering, baby fingers never at rest
Fumbling for a silver trinket that used to swing in the mother’s breast.

Sapping at the man's grown nerves the helpless baby's fear and desire,
 Like a crystal fault in granite, unseen till the lintel cracks, or a fire
 Sown in harbor in a ship's hold where it smoulders seven days
 With no smoke and then the lonely midmost ocean beholds the blaze.
 Mother's love eclipsed the dues of the living, itself in its darkness hid,
 Obscure moon of the dead; the secret child within him ruled what he did.
 Tore at his sleep and tortured him, and let his hired Swiss run the farm
 While he credited crazy symbols, for omens flock as the vultures swarm
 Over carrion, to shadow the shaky-nerved.... Peace also had singular dreams,
 Swam in a pool of darting serpents, or played in a novelist's chariot-games,
 Under thousands of men's eyes round the high stone altars and theatre-courses,
 Scaled with plates of blazing silver, guiding a galloping hurricane of horses.

IV

Hicks, the sheriff's man, drove up to the door and switched off his machine.
 "How do you do, Mrs. O'Farrell?" "Why, Sherman Hicks, is it you? Come in."
 "Just on business, Peace. We used to think there was better than that between
 us.

Have you seen Dave Carrow around, they want him over there in Salinas."
 "David—what do you want David for?" "The draft-board wants him, Peace.
 Called him and he didn't show up, his people don't know where he is,
 Least they say they don't." "I don't know either, I haven't seen him in weeks.
 David a coward and slacker, I hope you catch him." "Likely we will," said Hicks.
 "I was talking to Walt Vogel, he says he's watched the old woman crawl
 Up the hillside when the sun went down with a bundle wrapped in a shawl."
 "Sanctified young puppy," said Peace, "that yellow streak is certain to show.
 Once he tried to kiss me, the crazy boy; I never liked him though;
 Christian David." "Do boys often try?" "Jamie's away so much,
 Digging his new wells—No! Sherman." "God, Peace you're a sweet girl to
 touch."

"Sherman, I'm half crazy myself, but let it be, it's over now.
 Hope you catch your slacker, if I hear about him I'll let you know."

V

Peace dreamed marvellously all night and Carmel Mission the desolate church
 Grown much larger and more lovely and belted with a shining porch
 Of enormous pillars blazed with rosy light, the whole beauty was hers,
 All her blood went wild to feel the aisles fill up with worshippers.

Indians and all sorts of men, and women with sheer silk bridal veils,
Bold vaqueros with broad spurs and bandit captains out of old tales.
Soldiers too, thousands of soldiers, bayonet carriers, beautiful killers,
Tall Americans and short Frenchmen shouldering the crowd in the shadow of
the pillars.

First the worshippers adored the small star-window over the door,
While the door moved eagerly wide for the entrance of multitudes more and
more.

Then the sweet silver and terrible bells rang out wild welcome and swayed the
domed steeple,

While the sucking wings of the doorway pulsed and quivered for the entrance
of people.

Next the multitude adored the crucifix over the high stone altar,
There a serpent for Christ was hanging, the whole crowd worshipped and did
not falter.

Wild choirs of boys' voices pealed, in unison all the roof-tiles rang,

All the rafters gave a silver noise and all the columns sang.

Sepulchred saints beneath the altar began to sing for Peace and to call.

She—her vestment silks were torn and she would be shamed before them all.

Her the crowd awaited, now it was crying her name, it howled like a wolf,
Horrible fears ran blind through her body, a luxury of shame, what hiding,
what gulf?

Suddenly out of a smell of ferns and streams, out of the quiet hill-mist,
David came and clasped her shoulder, "Come with me Peace, we will see
Christ."

Though her body was naked he did not see nor mind, her mouth was chill
With sweet water and canyon streams, and death it seemed, in the sleep of the
hill.

When the gates of the east were widened, the wan stars gathered home their
gleams,

Golden-haired the gorgeous day came out of the valley to kill dreams.

VI

Peace had left the work to the servant after the noon meal was done,
When the hateful hour had passed and her husband and the men were gone.
Peace went up to her own room and watched from the windows west and south
Sea-gulls weave a windy storm-dance over the shore at the Carmel mouth.
Gulls by thousands flying the south wind, two swarms like columns slender and
far

Towering from the Carmel sand-beach and spiring above the Carmel bar.
Columns curving on the wind and rootless near the water; and higher
Up the beautiful coast-range hills were columns of smoke and crescents of fire.
Where the ranchers fired their hill-fields, they felt the hurry of wind from the
south,

Hoped the waited rain would come, they were clearing the pastures for new
growth.

All the hills were glassy clear, the yellow slopes and the trees beyond
Like a picture under glass or like the moss in a quiet pond.
Peace began to tremble greatly, and found in a drawer, done in old cloth,
Field-glasses, and focussed them to her eyes and felt the heights of the south.
Homesick for the forest, and full of hatred she thought for David, turning
To the quiet slopes on the right, away from the ridge where fires were burning.
Searching pines and bushes of sage and lupine, the deer-paths and rabbit-runs,
Cattle-paths, and the dim wheel-tracks up from Carrow's farm, and once
While she watched a shadow a man's form passed in the forest, the glasses
shaking

Spilt the vision, her arms and eyes were so weary and all her body was aching.
But at sundown she saw a woman, and knew it was David's mother, steal
Up the cow-path with a bundle wrapped in a shawl, and up the hill.
Hands shook and breath shortened again, the woman wound back and forth
from sight,

Stood by a tree, returned without the bundle through the gathering night.
"Ah my Christian Davie, blue-eyed forest coyote, caught I say, caught.
Poor old mother thinking her boy hungry, it's more than food you've brought.
Better have left him poison mother, a traitor and coward, far better have
touched

Twenty-two years ago the heavy nipple with strychnine when the young lips
clutched.

Now he'll rot his shame in prison." Peace, laughing and laying the glasses down,
Called up Sherman Hicks, the sheriff's deputy, on the telephone;
Told him what she'd seen, "And you," she said, "drive up by the valley road,
Leave your car and climb the ridge, we'll catch our fox when he comes for his
food.

You must climb the ridge, I'll call one of the farmhands and ride by the west,
David will be caught between us before we meet on the hill crest.

There's no underbrush to hide in, only a few pines standing alone.

Quietly Sherman, very quietly. No lights, we'll have the full of the moon."

Hicks was laughing to himself to find so eager a volunteer.

"Better let me walk in the hills and you be safe in bed, my dear.

Ain't good sense for a pretty woman to poke about in the woods at night.
There's a south wind blowing up clouds and there'll be precious little light,
Peace, from that full moon of yours to see with in an hour or so.
Then, besides, your husband mightn't like it." "No," answered Peace "I'll go.
Better to ride in the dark hills than dream of the horrors all night long.
Trust me to take care of myself, I'll take my automatic along."
Peace went out and found her husband fetching a lantern from the shed.
"Jamie, won't you come with me, I've got to go for a ride," Peace said.
"Going to help the sheriff's deputy catch a slacker up in the wood.
David Carrow's dodging the draft, I saw his mother taking him food.
I can help, it's war-time Jamie, each one of us must help as we're able."
But he answered, "I've got to fetch another lantern out of the stable.
For I'm going to work all night, it'll rain before to-morrow night.
There's a south wind blowing up rain, I've got to work by lantern light.
Rain will come and the river'll flood, the rain will wash the dirt like salt,
But I've struck the second tunnel running down to the rich vault.
I've been digging in a dirt of dead men's bones for seven or eight weeks,
Sunk a shaft and run a drift, and you can ride with Sherman Hicks.
Ride and be damned, it's nothing to me." "But Jamie, dear, if you won't come
Let me have George or Johnny or Frank to see me safe and bring me home."
"No, I'll need their help to cut the sand-bar, you can't have one of the men,
For I'll want them all in the morning if the floodwaters begin."

VII

On the hills were crescents of fire that crackled and spurted blood-red light,
Over the hills the patient moon was spilling silver down the night.
Peace rode high in the pines and James her husband dug his pit in the earth,
Burning to rake old riches from concealment and bring the earth's child to
birth.
Amorously piercing the impure depth, the prone breast lulled by the night.
Plowing a channel for his dream with shovel and pick by lantern light.
Peace rode up in the open pinewood, clouds were pushed up over the moon,
Patches of light, patches of dark, on the open hill slope plunging and strewn.
In a patch of shadow her pony shied, a boy said tender-voiced:
"I was waiting for you up here, come with me Peace, we will see Christ."
"We'll see Sherman Hicks, the deputy-sheriff, that's the man we must see.
David, you're a fool to have run away from the fighting; and, David, from me.
When I kissed you on your mouth, have you forgotten, David?" "Not yet.
But in jail I'll soon forget and here in the hills I'd soon forget."

It was nothing, Peace. So you've come up to catch me?" "How can I know?
But to own you body and soul. I can give you up, I can let you go.
God it's pleasant, David to possess you; to own a man like a horse.
This one moment you're all mine, I can give you up to prison or worse,
I can set you free of the hills dear, I can do better than let you go,
Find you money and make you a way and over the border to Mexico.
Choose, you'll kiss me, David?" "I'll do more, O Peace, you homing dove,
Lovely and perfect messenger, come with me Peace, we will see love.
It was hurting here in my brain, in the nights I dreamed of you alone,
When I ought to have dreamed of Jesus Christ the other adorable one.
I was angry at you, Peace, for drawing me down from the promised desire,
Now I see that God was at work and both of us fagots for that fire:
Let your pony graze, come down the gulch with me, Peace, till the men are
gone.
God has sworn me promises. O Peace your love and Christ's are one."
"You would hurt me, David." "O we are going to the fire, the fire of the world
Ending, heaven beginning, spirits set loose, the seas burned, the stars hurled.
Love me, Peace. I love you. That is Christ. I love you, I love you, Peace.
All the world is slipping to cinders about us and love is all that there is,
Come, my Peace, come Peace." "Ah, but you'd hurt me, David." "I will not
touch
Even your hair's tip with my lips, I love you too much, I love you too much."
Marvellous sorcery of the night, the splintered moon-gleams, the south wind
gushing,
Pines, the sky so near, the fires, the high withdrawal, the south wind pushing.
Peace swung down from the saddle, "We both are crazy, David. Come. You and
I."
Down the gulch they lay in a shadow and heard the sheriff's man go by.
Heard the horse puff, the man pause; and heard him catch the horse, and stand
still.
Heard the pumping of their blood and the south wind pouring across the hill.
After enormous intervals the man called once or twice, the south
Washed his voice down the dark slope. Peace carried David's hand to her
mouth.
Now the moon was gone, the hill-fold hid the fires, no stars, no light.
Peace had whipped her arms around David's neck. The man rode by in the
night.
David wished to rise. "Hush, he'll comb all the hill, there's no good way
But lie still and wait, against the sky he'd see us, black against gray.
Sweetheart, rest on me," she said. "How can I rest, we have Christ to find."

"Sweetheart, rest on me in this secret harbor out of the beating wind."

"Peace, when you came up to catch me then you were not betraying me."

"Hush.

Where is Christ? but love grows here on the hill, wild, wild, God's grape to crush.

Sent by God, you said I was. A wild grape, a wild gift in the dark.

Storm to hide us. When dawn comes if you hate me kill me at the first spark."

Now the storm grew heavy with rain, the burdened south wind let big drops fall.

Peace could feel her flesh move at their touch, her mind felt nothing at all

Of the storm, but only a confused fire, her lips felt David's lips

In the sensuous gatherings of the wind and the night, in the world's eclipse.

Down below the big drops thudded on fresh earth, in the valley below

Where that silver-covetous mole was burrowing by the river's flow

In his tunnel with his lanterns; and westward the horizontal drift

Skimmed the ocean, pelting the waves sidewise under the weather's lift.

Eastward where the greedy brush-fires bent under the buffeting wind

Hissed the rain, red steam poured up the night, the coals blackened, went blind.

But far eastward under another rain there was metal raining too,

Fire and metal, and men laboring and fighting in a filth of mud like glue.

Peace was pasturing in the rain on the little field of her despair,

Eating the reckless heart of joy with lips like fire through the loosened hair.

"David. Ah. Ah. Dearest. Kill me, kill me now; how can I live

All the coming years?" In a moment David prayed, "God, God, forgive

Me this woman's pitiful fool." He moaned, he struck her mouth and her

throat's

Curve, she screamed and ripped her pistol from its case and fired three shots.

Up the hill came a cry in answer. Peace ran to the hoof-beats. "Help, Sherman.

Ride. Ride!

Sherman. Kill the beast. He dragged me from the saddle. He struck me, he

tried..."

"Which way did he run?" "Up there, up hill." The man spurred, the horse went down,

Winded from the slope, tripped in a gopher-burrow. "God damn it, I'm thrown."

He was cursing the rain and the horse, the hills, the darkness, the hurt in his side.

Peace came and he grumbled, "Sorry, Peace. He's out, no good to ride,

Fetlock snapped, your pony. We can't do more to-night. I'll take you home.

But I'll catch that running devil, by God, if it takes till kingdom come."

“Sherman, you’re not hurt?” “No, did he hurt you, Peace?” “He struck me...
No.

And I’m not going home, not till we get him, Sherman; I say I won’t go.”
“O, you’re plucky, Peace.” “I think I hit him, once, yes the first shot.
Beast. The filthy beast. The filthy beast. He struck my mouth and my throat.”
“Hell’s too sweet for these damned runaway cowards, the army’ll deal them
worse,”

Sherman answered, fumbling at wet buckles, unbridling the fallen horse.
Furiously the rain came down, in a moment the gully they were in
Flowed, a distant lightning flash drew cataracts on the hill and the lean
Pinetrees arched in the flurry of weather. Peace began screaming “Rain, dear
rain

Poison his bullet wound I made, storm break his bones, blind him with pain.
Lightning scald his eyes but never kill him.” Her voice broke and went wild,
Back her head snapped and she screamed like a beast and choked and sobbed
like a child.

Sherman begged her to be quiet, then shook her with his hands, and he heard
Someone crying not far away, and panting up hill, and the storm poured.
“Who is there, who is it?” he said. Peace laughed, “The old mother of the dog.
Mother, have you brought him more food, he won’t eat it, I fed him a lead
slug.”

Sherman’s flashlight played across the rain-lines on a gray form they veiled,
Streaming soaked gray hair and a gray sick face and gray lips gasping, “Killed?”
“No. He’s got away from us. You’re his mother.” “David’s mother, yes, yes,”
Breathed the old woman blinking at the light and panting. Then suddenly
Peace

Laughed, “My God, to think that such a withered old nut-shell had such meat.
Mother, have you brought him more food, he won’t eat it, I gave him lead to
eat.”

“Killed? She means he’s dead.” Hicks answered, “No ma’am, he’s got away up
the hill.”

Peace cried out, “Your milk was too weak, old poisoner; he’ll rot in a prison, he
will.”

Hicks said, “Will you help me with the lady ma’am, she’s clean off her head.
Had a bad fall on the hill, her horse fell, busted its leg,” he said.

“Broke his leg—my boy?” “No no, the horse did, the horse fell, the lady’s hurt.”
“O poor Mrs. O’Farrell it’s you, it’s you, do come dear.” “You mother of dirt,”
Mumbled Peace, “I’ll spit on you if you touch me. Wet hag don’t dare,” she
screamed.

So the three stood gazing. Gray in the vault of the rain the flashlight gleamed.

Suddenly Peace straightened and fell, and Sherman lifted her and said,
“Mrs. Carrow we must take her to your house, we must get her to bed.”
Down the hill they toiled together, stumbling over pine-roots and stones;
Hundred-gurgling water shuttered from their ears the hurt horse’s groans.

VIII

David lay on the torrent hillside and tore at a flesh-wound in his thigh,
Drenched his finger-nails in the running blood praying God to make him die.
Down in the valley James O’Farrell deepened his empty mine in vain;
Down the dirt-wall of the shaft a serpent rivulet of the rain
Crawled, the lanterns gave it two red eyes. He dug in the fume and dust
With religious fear, he found each lump of earth an omen to trust,
Felt in every bit of gravel or quartz-brilliant or mica flake
Memories of some dream, and a promise sacred for a prayer’s sake.
There were two men bound for death, one lay on the hill and tore his wound,
One was tearing at the deep breast of his mother, both were death-bound.
Over all the valley and hill and over the black woods and black waves
Poured the solid waters of the permanent rain from clouds like caves.
From the mossed pines at Point Pinos south to the Big Sur redwood groves
Trees were trembling with delight and dreaming roots remembered their loves.
Seeds began to swell in their dreams and omens filled the streaming earth,
Omens of lifting from concealment... of raising in the air... of bringing to
birth...
Stirrings of the secret force that gathers itself under the ground
To make signals in the splendid light of day when the year turns round.
David prayed, “I have soiled myself to the bone, I am blacker than hell and this
night,
Let my body that sinned be punished, kill me and clean me, bleed me all white,
Draw my spirit out of this sheath of death, the damnation of proud hope
Tripped me while I ran in the hills, dear God this dirt be covered up,
Buried under, damned and blotted down in the dirty breast of the earth.
Draw my spirit from hiding, lift it up in the air God, O draw it forth.
To be least and lowest in heaven, and a servant of the happy and sweet
Faithful in some little thing that see no higher than to your feet.
For I held your promise O God the son of God to see you whole,
Crazy with pride, and the first and least temptation left me a traitor and fool.
There is no one such a fool, no traitor so little tempted, not one,
Nowhere such a vessel and beast of weakness, nowhere under the sun.
No one, nowhere,” droned his despair; flowing blood enfeebled it so he fell

Fast asleep in the waves of rain, in darkness like the valley of hell.
Dreamless sleep like heavy and deep waters covered his head, but when
Earth turned dawnward a weak dream swam over him, he seemed a child again.
Playing and wading along the sea-beach he found a cave among the rocks,
Where he lay to watch his father plowing the field above, while flocks
Of white sea-birds hovered plowman and horses and the happy and opened
earth.

He was hidden, he would delight in the cave, nothing should coax him forth.
David slept on the torrent hillside and James O'Farrell went fast asleep
Over his tools in the valley tunnel, a sleep like lead or heavy and deep
Waters covered his tired head, the lanterns flared and they died, but when
Earth turned dawnward a dream swam down the darkness, he seemed a child
again.

Saw the yellow Ohio sucking its low shores under dim trees;
He was fishing from the bank, his sister barefoot to the lean knees
Helped him when the line was tangled on a snag, then she went down
Among quicksands, the quicksands murmured "I am your mother, I am your
own

Mother and sister, prod me with your fishing-pole, we are down here,
Waiting to be weighed from concealment... to be lifted in the wild air..."

IX

Peace O'Farrell awoke in the Carrows' empty farmhouse and seemed to know
Instantly in the darkness all that had been done night hours ago.
David's mother had tenderly undressed her and rubbed her skin and her hair
With warm towels, and heated flat-irons for her feet so ice-cold they were.
Tended her like an old nurse and soothed her moans and stroked her head,
Given her some hot drink she would not swallow, and tucked her in David's
bed.

Peace remembered where her clothes were hung though she had been senseless
then.

First she thought she must off the old woman's night-dress, though it was
laundered clean

Still it was that old woman's; Peace felt purer when it lay on the floor.
Warm from bed she felt no cold at all; but the planks cried, and the door
Violently cracked its hinges, and if she should knock a chair in the little hall
All the house would be up with lights and she would be shamed before them
all.

Lights, why the hall was dizzy with light. Peace stood like iron in the low door,

Like a wild beast cornered, too proud to hide her body. "I will hide it no more,"
Moved her thought, "I have hid my womanhood too long, from myself even.
Was it indeed so shameful?" Low in the west, more on the sea than in heaven
Rolled the broad moon, all the rain was banished, the clouds were gone in the
west,

Level through the window played the splendor and lay like flame on her breast.
Native of the light she burned on the oblong blackness all silver and flame,
Female and not veiled, though eyes had been there to see her she could have felt
shame

No more than a cloudless mountain the low dawn fountains up light to seek,
When the cedar shadows are upright like the cedars on the slope to the peak.
She stole down the moonlit stair and found her clothes on chairs by the hearth.
No one stirred in any chamber, and the door was not locked, and she stole forth
Leaving to its ghosts an empty house, and followed the shadows up
Eastward, with the wash of the lit sea behind, and ahead the long slope.

X

James O'Farrell awoke and found himself in fear in the dark of the womb,
Smothered in a horror of smelling earth in the musky mother tomb.
Pressed by mass and brutal tons and buried out of sight and of mind,
Stench of dead earth and starved lights, concealed and lost, buried and blind.
Like a drowned man in midocean or like a dead man in the mid heart
Of a public graveyard, caverned with thousands, a communist people of dirt.
Nothing pure or erect or private, no separate honor, no inscribed stones,
But the liquids of each rotting body run through on a brother's bones.
David Carrow awoke on the hill in the wonderful pure and honey sweet
Shining of the moon in the west, and the valley was like a lake at his feet.
Night was only a dreamed hell, and the hurt in his thigh was like the scar
Where a soldier gored the side of God, the flesh of the morning star.
Strength of the human soul to suffer or sin to its dream's uttermost
And forget it all in an hour and fling at the stars like a young hawk loosed.
James O'Farrell broke through his dream and crawled along the drift to the
shaft,

Where a phantom pallor of twice-reflected moonlight silently laughed,
Swimming on a puddle below the minehead, and up the ladder a skin
Of green starless cloudless sky, and a falling, the river was running in.
Seen from the top ladder steps the valley was all a lake from the south,
White and silent mirror of moonlight backing up from the sand-barred mouth,
Beautiful and a death of hope. "Why should I dig again," he said.

“You are too strong old mother, you have damned me with signs and lies, you
hide your dead.

All the pretty promises broken, you liar. You’d have kept me and choked me
down there.

Suck your own dirt animal maw, I will not go down, I will die in the air.”

While the water lapped his feet he kicked the loose earth over the rim,
Watched the eager cataract eat the heaps, and the banks bulge down and brim.
There at the cataract end of life he stood and looked at the hill slope,
Where there were height, and splendid inclines of spacious moonlight, and a
lifting hope.

Hope the ghost of hope reached back for a hold on life, like the talking dead,
Shells of extinct men, the larvae and masks that hover a medium’s head.

“I will go up in the hills,” he said, “and find the sun in the hills, and there
Work this body from concealment and weigh it up high in the wild air...”

Walking like a stone-faced sleepwalker, his feet not feeling the earth,
With the moon-gleam in his white eyes, he caught a horse and looped the girth,
Took a hackamore along besides the bridle, and as he rode
Worked a knot in the rough horse-hair. From the bridge he saw the moonlit
flood

Plating half his pasture-land with pure sheet silver, and half a mile down
Breakers flung black handfuls above the bar across the seafaring moon.

XI

Peace O’Farrell strained up the slope and heard a sobbing under a pine.

“What are you doing here, gray mother?” “My boy. Whatever he’s done he’s
mine.

God, dear God for the little boy that used to look into my face,
With his hands holding my finger and his body against my old knees.
In the milky days before they made a war, when my boy was my own,
When he wanted no woman but me and Christ and the war could let him alone.
Sherman Hicks went out the door when the rain was done in the moonlight
shine,

And I followed him up the cow-path and fell down against a pine.

David’s father came and passed me, and raving mad because of the stain
David tried to do to you, Mrs. O’Farrell, in the sickness of his brain.”

“Sick, I know he’s sick,” Peace answered, “and sick enough and ready to die.

Show me which way Sherman went, and I’ll beg off for your baby, I’ll try.

Tell me which way Sherman went, you sack of bones get up if you can.

I’ll take after Sherman Hicks and you must catch your crazy old man.”

“Sweetheart,” mumbled the old creature, “he went by the left by the broken tree,
But it’s no use knocking the darkness now the moon’s gone down in the sea.”
Peace went up the solid darkness and heard the mother stumble behind.
Sherman clambered near the height, the west was blackened, the night blind.
James O’Farrell rode up the under-slope, fumbling the hackamore still.
David Carrow stood on the height and there were six came up the hill.
Three were men and two were women, the sixth was neither man nor woman,
He was higher and lovelier than the pine-tops, and human and not human.
He was a shining out of the east before the star that kills the night,
Like a walking tower on the ridge between the hilltops, a tower of light.
Peace O’Farrell believed he was the dawn, and by the light of him saw
David kneel on the lonely hilltop, waving his arms with wonder and awe.
And saw Sherman walking through a bush, dazzled and black in the shine,
And saw risings at the sky, and pine-stumps move on the mountain line.
David wept, his weakness and tears and pain were the servants of delight,
In the sudden apocalypse of love, the splitting asunder of night.
Darkness was torn both ways like a cloth and cast on the earth like a sheet;
David dared not look at the face for the fiery lightning of the feet.
Wild choirs of boys’ voices and of men’s and women’s wandered the mountain,
Music poured along the ridge and a pointed fire of flutes like a fountain
Jetted from the peak and joined the swimming stars, the stars sang chime,
Carollers ranged the breaking night for it was near the Christmas time.

CHOROS

God was a hawk in the glow of the morning, a bee in the rose that has stars
for her petals,
The far lights felt him, the first-born lamps
Spun from the brush of his wings when he bathed in the splendor of a
firmament men’s eyes never imaged,
Exulting in the beauty of things, a free eagle.
But love drew him dustward, for love’s sake he stooped, like a lover came
God with a garland of suns
In his locks and the wild wine freedom on his lips
To the earth and the arms of a Jewess, and to house with a tribe of tame
serpents in the handmaiden planet
Of a least of the stars—the descent of the lover.

ANTICHOROS

You mountains of Asia a vain tale came to us once in old days when we
tasted the sunlight,
It was said that a Savior inherited the earth.
That his footsteps from Syria were fruitful and the honey of his lips from
Samaria made beautiful the nations
With powerful obedience and the peoples with peace.
Gray mountains of Asia we have come to the end of that dream, when we
touched it the iris-tinted
Bubble was a froth-work of blood and of fire.

David saw the hearts of men in the east, in Europe and Asia too,
And his own was like a singing breaking glass, or a globe of dew.
Peace O'Farrell saw little of these things, she only felt she must save
David, and she hasted and caught Sherman's hand, and the kiss that she gave
Was no sister of Iscariot's. "Why do you think I went on the height,
Sherman dear, and risked myself in the night for nothing and again in the
night?
Was it to catch your slacker, what do I want with that, it was all for you.
It was hard to find a chance, those married eyes can see me through.
Think I'll make another chance if this one doesn't win me a kiss?"
He was manageable, this man. And David was left to his happiness.

CHOROS

When God was made man he had something to suffer, a story of a stable,
and to weep and be wounded,
Little clogs on great glory, and suddenly he soared
Wide of the Syrians and Romans, and the world that they ravaged was an
atom in a multitude, surrounded
By the splendor of the dawn's lamps dancing to their Lord.
By the splendor, by the blazing, by the gladness, the brave choir of the gods
of the morning and the lords of the night,
When he leaned and looked home from the marvellous porches,
And his love like a home-dipping swallow came down from the doors of the
orient, the mountains of light,
The towers of the dawn that have roses for torches.

ANTICHOROS

No, no. He fell down to his place and has found it, when he fainted from the
far-stretched limbs of the cross,
And darkness fell home over Golgotha, and God
Tore in despair the great veil of his temple and regarded not what dead men
pushed up from the graves
On the hillside ill-hallowed, and grinding brown teeth
On the rottenness of jaws fallen inward ran down on the city Jerusalem
gibbering and mumbling
Of the earthquake and graves rent and a Roman desolation.

There were five on the hill-slope crying for death or love, and one on the height.
Terrible radiations of intense desire streamed up the night.
While the fierce old anger David's father cut through the swell and flow
Of the waves of vision deaf and blind. "You coward, I'd have let you go.
Couldn't leave the women alone, you dirty coward?" He fired, and the breath
Dove-shaped burned at David's mouth to nest in the bosom of the splendor of
death.
"Father, it doesn't hurt. Love, love, we are mixed in the fire, the fire of the
world
Ending, heaven beginning, spirits set free, the seas burned, the stars hurled.
All the promises have come true. I love you, I love you, Lord." He saw
The great vision leaning to kiss his eyes, and cried with delight and awe.

CHOROS

Mountains of Asia you masts of a little bark that floats on a firmament of
waters,
Himalayas have you seen across the beam-ends of the earth
The master-star of the stars when he brightens at the blossoming of
midnight, when he beckons to his daughters,
And they wreath him with dances when his rays are sent forth?
Dark Amazon daughter of the Andes when you flowed full flood at the
dawn-star when night died on the sea,
When the Andes and the Alps were answering from far,
Broad Volga bride-sister of the Urals, when the Kiolen barked answer to
Caucasus for the north was made free
Did they speak of that father, of that master, did they point at that star?
And an hour before dawn when the night was split open on the path of the
planets to its height
Did they speak of the guidance of things, and the fury of the wings of the
speed of the light, and who governs the light?

ANTICHOROS

Lord in the night, in the storm Lord, fear takes hold, hot anger bites like a
 hound
 Men's hearts, fearfully rages the storm, loud spirits are stirred, lights flicker
 around,
 Lights from the false ghosts' foreheads glitter through night's black entrails
 pricked by the flashes,
 Corposant lightnings leap on the crags, live fires on the heights that the loud
 wind lashes.
 Lord when our bowels were shrunken, bad passions had maimed us, we
 raised seared eyes from the burning,
 No cold Godhead's gaze made answer from heaven but a young man's
 passionate yearning
 Stooped to us, beautiful over the storm. More loved is our Lord than a lamp
 in the night,
 Sweeter than wild bees' hivings, stronger than storm in the mountains,
 lovelier than light.

There the vision broke, for David's spirit had made it and the spirit went out.
 Only little noises moved in the night, dim sobbings, walkings about.
 Only James O'Farrell held fast the purpose that brought him to the hill,
 Rode across the scattered others, fumbling the horse-hair hackamore still.
 Reached at dawn the highest pine on the evident peak of the hill, and there
 Lifted his body from concealment and hanged it up high in the white air.
 Down the hill they heard the horse run loose, they saw black fruit on the tree;
 And the river broke its bar, and rushed into the bitter sea.

Publication. *Tamar and Other Poems* (Peter G. Boyle, 1924), in its original sequence.

Provenance. Text checked against the Robinson Jeffers Association's corrected public-domain 1925 witness; the 2025 textual genealogy establishes the 1924 contents and order.

Divinely Superfluous Beauty

The storm-dances of gulls, the barking game of seals,
Over and under the ocean...
Rules the games, presides over destinies, makes trees grow
And hills tower, waves fall.
The incredible beauty of joy
Stars with fire the joining of lips, O let our loves too
Be joined, there is not a maiden
Burns and thirsts for love
More than my blood for you, by the shore of seals while the wings
Weave like a web in the air

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The Maid's Thought

Why listen, even the water is sobbing for something.
The west wind is dead, the waves
Forget to hate the cliff, in the upland canyons
Whole hillsides burst aglow
With golden broom. Dear how it rained last month,
And every pool was rimmed
With sulphury pollen dust of the wakening pines.
Now tall and slender suddenly
The stalks of purple iris blaze by the brooks,
The pencilled ones on the hill;
This deerweed shivers with gold, the white globe-tulips
Blow out their silky bubbles,
But in the next glen bronze-bells nod, the does
Scalded by some hot longing
Can hardly set their pointed hoofs to expect
Love but they crush a flower;
Shells pair on the rock, birds mate, the moths fly double.
O it is time for us now
Mouth kindling mouth to entangle our maiden bodies
To make that burning flower.

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Fauna

I

On the low knoll above the Carmel mouth
A young man was alone he thought, and spoke
A song of how love came from the hot south
In the likeness of a girl, and like a bird
Flew at him from the burning sun and broke
His dream of peace. Dear hills you surely heard,
Pine-crested Santa Lucian hills, although
The old accustomed ocean's tidal flow

Is louder in your sense, and the low wind
Much more melodious than those tones of one
Who dreamed himself alone
And was not so, because a white girl leaned
Listening against a moss-grown boulder stone.

"Swift love a Marchwind swallow from the south
Came flying, the fleet breath of those burning wings
Blew ash and bitter dust into my mouth
From the heaped hearth, and set my house afire,
I laughed aloud to see the household things
Spoiled by hot violence and insane desire,
And thanked sweet love, merciless love, and gave her
Wine of my grapes to sip and my heart to savor.

"Fauna the sun has kissed your body brown,
The hot south sun, but O I hate the white
Teeth of bold waves that bite
Your shining ankles when you wander down
To dance on the dim shore a moonlit night.

"Because there is one girl's beauty and one girl's mouth
Forbidden me and gainsaid in the eyes of honor,
Swift love a springtime swallow from the south
Came flying and laughing; my numb lips I know
Have strong command to make no trial upon her,
Yet being solitary I may sing low
And thank sweet love, merciless love, and make
Music from lips parched up when my limbs ache

"In the furnace of vain yearning; O April bird
Flown up from the fair south, O fond fleet swallow
Why did you cry me to follow
(You Santa Lucian hills you also heard
That cry) this one prohibited path, a hollow

"Lane leading downward to false caverns dark
Of foreaccurst delight? I will not fare
That way nor task my spirit to tend that spark
Of loveliness that has no word, nor wreath
One flower but this in the free gold of that hair,
And though for longing I can hardly breathe
I will not speak nor touch, but singing alone
Make useless music shyly and silent moan.

"Fauna the sun has kissed your body brown,
The hot south sun, but O I hate the white
Teeth of those waves that bite
Your dancing ankles when you wander down
Alone under the dunes a moonlit night.

"The gates of her approach are jewelled and golden
Yet for a song I think they would fall down;
Fountains of fortunate waters un beholden
Jet in the shadowy court on gemlike fronds
Of emerald fern; the sun that burned you brown
Was not my mouth, my mouth is under bonds,
Fauna, and though I sing I may not kiss.
O thank sweet love, merciless love, for this.

"Love that flew up from the south a Marchwind bird,
You Santa Lucian hills moreover saw
The marvel there and the awe,
You Rivers of the South you also heard
The seatides of my sobbing heart withdraw.

“Up in the Carmel Valley are orchards laden
With fragrant apples when rich autumn weather
Hazes the shallowing stream the cattle wade in
And the amber hills and golden shores below,
There by the river ripening all together
The rosy and honey-clustered apples grow;
Fauna that you and I might linger there
When the flushed fruits fall from the glowing air.

“Would God the sun that kissed your body brown
Had been my mouth, Fauna, or mine the white
Teeth of bold waves that bite
Your heedless ankles when you wander down
To dance under the dunes a moonlit night.

“She is not a virgin yet of me she is maiden
Forever; I must lay this chain to heart.
Nor dare we lie in the orchards autumn-laden,
Nor any glade of Santa Lucian leaves
Will shadow our heat of love, we are more apart
Than stone-peaked Grayback whom the high wind grieves
Stands from the autumn-stagnant Carmel’s bar,
Or the strong northstar from the Scorpion star.

“Fauna, had fate been cast in finer fashion
The pines of the peninsula would have stirred
To my song, and every bird
By the Rivers of the South echoed my passion,
And the Santa Lucian summit-hills have heard

“The lightest whisper of our love, and bent
Above us for our love’s sake to the seas,
While hand in hand under their heights we went
To gather by the Rivers of the South
Cool wreaths of fern and the hoards of perfumed bees
That hive there the right honey for your mouth.
But now because our fates are thus and so,
We must die sundered, we shall never go.

“Fauna, I hate the sun that kissed you brown,
Fauna, I hate the insolent delicate white
Teeth of those waves that bite
Your shining ankles when you wander down
To dance on the dim shore a moonlit night.”

II

Then the white girl from her gray boulder stone:
“What ails you at grief to take delight in it
And make shy music and half silent moan?
When did love care for honor?” And he amazed:
“Love’s a wild colt and snaps his teeth on the bit.
The wildest mustang that the mountain grazed
Will tame and take a rider; but I must mind
My honor though love’s wilder and though love’s blind.”

And Nais, with laughter like the drippings of
The little waxen chambers of wild bees:
“O nicely! You are at ease
In your nice fort of honor and know not love,
You men, that is free wind on sweet wild seas.

“Love that forgets in a moment, and remembers
Ten thousand years one pale and sacred face.
That is a golden fisher of pearls and ambers
Out of the monstrous ocean gulfs, but evens
Ghostly remembrance with forgetfulness;
And would scorn honor though in the heaven of heavens
He stared in face of God... who should gaze down
Connivingly and frankly, without frown.”

“Fauna, the sun has kissed your body brown,
The hot south sun. Dear hills you also heard,
You holier hills, that word.
Sweet Rivers of the South that wander down
Seaward, have you seen love? a wilder bird

“Than the azure keen white-belted kingfisher
Who dives from your dense boughs on dapply trout.
When Fauna passes I go mad for her,
I’d build her a golden house and pave the whole
With rubies from my heart, and all without
Should burn with burnished jewels as a judged soul
In dishonorable hell with fire forever:
And there she’d sleep and I should visit her never.

“Fauna, the sun, the sun that kissed you brown
You must not say that it was not my mouth.
You Rivers of the South
What will you say dear rivers wandering down
Seaward, of my desire and my throat’s drouth?”

Then Nais with laughter like the drippings of
Some broken honeycomb of lordless bees:
“My dear you’ll find yourself in the house of love
When forty seasons pass! But of this passion
You’ll find neither forgetfulness nor ease
Until I set your fates in lovelier fashion
And you in fairer ways and mind more fit
To ride this wild colt whose teeth grind the bit.

“Was there ever a foal that prayed not to be ridden?
You are the fool to let this foal run free.
Fauna, Fauna...is it she
Who loveworthy for loving things forbidden
Was drunk in the deep vineyard over the sea?”

“O,” he laughed out, “I saw her there, we saw
The vines trampled under her veering steps,
The vinestocks broken, the wonder there and the awe
When Fauna sang before the gleaners came,
Fettling her choice feet for the chosen grapes,
And dancing under the red sundown flame
Out of the vineyard to the olive hill,
And bidding all the vintage men be still,

“Because the mouth that kissed her body brown
Was not a man’s but a great God’s the Sun’s.
There Nais we snared her once

In the fragrance of the grapes, there she fell down
By the winepress on the heap of hulls and stones.”
Then Nais with laughter like crushed honeycomb:
“Would you love me if I’d been drunken there?
Deep in the south your Fauna finds her home,
A gold-ringed wife and childless. But look at me
Unclaimed of man: am I not lovelier,
I northward born not half so brown as she?
I could delight in apples, Fauna had
The purple-hearted grapes to make her glad.

“Up in the Carmel Valley are orchards laden
And glowing with apples in the golden weather,
There let us walk together
Hand clasped in hand, the young man with the maiden,
And love foregoing that Fauna moults no feather.”

“With you!” he laughed roughly and ran away
Some forty paces toward the impassioned strand
Where beat on the lank river-bar all day
And break the white-maned racers from the west;
But Nais although he turned not waved her hand;
You Rivers of the South will you attest
The marvel then, the music there and awe?
Dear Santa Lucian hills you also saw.
For while her hand’s white forest-flower was shaken,
A Santa Cruz white flagflower, there was heard
Music of flutes that stirred
The mountain, and mazed harps began to awaken
In all the mountain hollows every bird.

And from the sunfall splendor issued a fire
Of hosted voices chanting, and in the south
Strong-throbbing the strung throat of a Greek lyre
Caught up the tune, and northward there was none
To San Francisco harbor’s golden mouth
But heard the music gather power and run
On the ocean shore, a triumph of harp and lyre,
Flute, hautboy, fife, and all that feed desire

With sound: sweet Rivers of the South you heard,
Dear Santa Lucian hills you surely saw
The wonder there and the awe
Of spiritual fingers plucking strings and paired
Lovers who drank delight of this new law

And tyranny of struck timbrels turning back
The man's lips to the girl's and love to love.
The sundown splendor died, the night was black
And sea-fog blotted the sky's golden swarms,
The waves laughed in the dark and Nais yet strove
On the bare grass in her desire's bare arms
Laughing with brave delights and sobbing low.
Believe or not, the dawn beheld them so.

But soon on dawn a second marvel appeared,
The Mother of Love out of the morning foam
As once of old she had come
Rose: Rivers of the South you also heard
Her tones more rich than new-torn honeycomb.

Dear Santa Lucian hills you also saw
The august and rosy and blameless body arisen
From waters broken, the wonder there and the awe,
The dove-wings and the glory: but what she said
I may not now repeat, but as from prison
It loosed that lover, then his doubts were dead
And having learned of Nais the way to woo
He'll flower in time and fling at Fauna too.

Fauna, the sun to burn her body brown
That is his mouth, nor must he hate the white
Teeth of bold waves that bite
Her dancing ankles if she wander down
Love-drunken near the dunes a moonlit night.

III.

"When I crossed the seaward valley, by a sudden lightening of the moon
I saw very love
There in Fauna incarnate, and the wind uttered a cry, the waves a tune,
Wild swans cried above.

I saw love incarnate, all the beauty and all the cruelty and all the splendor.
Where her sandals trod
On the creek-bed stones were gold and fire embracing but between her tender
Breasts were Christ and God.
At her heels the leaping she-wolf that she feeds and keeps for her companion
Followed, tawny and fierce.
When the noise of barking seals on Soberanes rocks came up the canyon
Her wild friend pricked ears.
'Fauna, lately I learned of little Nais the way to love, O Fauna, love me!'
So I cried, but laughter,
Vanishing laughter answered, she was gone, I heard the wild swans crying above
me
And the wolf's growl after.
Blindly I sought her through the valley and in the mountains for the moon had
vanished
And her feet were soundless.
Blindly I seek and wander through the beautiful peninsula like a banished
Spirit in waste and boundless
Demon-visited deserts, while desire in my dry throat cries Dearest where
Do your wild feet wander?
By what streamside in what forest flows the drunken fragrance of your hair
For dull winds to squander?
Though I've asked the southwind and have questioned the eastwind and the
north concerning her
And besought the sea,
None responds, yet surely at some ford or mountainhead she falters, turning
her
Footsteps home to me.
Woodpeckers that thrid the wildwood branches, bluejays with black
helmet-crests,
Vultures of the sun,
Underforest wildflowers have you felt her feet, birds have you seen her breasts
Flash or bright feet run?
Tell her that I've slashed the face of honor for desire to kiss her feet,
But to embrace her bodily
I being thoroughly mad would give myself to torture, or to taste her sweet
Lie in the windrows bloodily,
Downed by despicable death in the place where the equal-minded warmen
meet,
And the Mother of Love smiles moodily."

IV.

“Ah drunken Fauna I knew I’d find you here
In the deep vineyard tasting sunburnt grapes
And hidden among the sixfoot vines.” “My dear
You knew me wisely but you’ve waited long.
The hour flashes and goes by, the girl escapes
Who timely tempted might have done some wrong
To honor, a kiss or so.” “A kiss or two!”
“When little Nais was teaching you to woo,
“(A shameless one, that wanton) did you swear
Because the sun had kissed my body brown
Your mouth must do it?” “I’ll own,
Witch, that you’ve wound me up in your bright hair.”
“When you dared fling at her the bird was flown.”

“A golden-feathered bird but wild and wild.”
“Too shy for stupid fowlers to pursue.”
“Wine-hearted Fauna, honey-throated child
What would the farmer say if he should come
And find us in his fragrant vineyard, you
Nibbling the fruit and me with finger and thumb
Squirting the juice into your breast?” “He’d say
‘Boys, chase the man with sticks, the girl may stay.’”

“Fauna, let’s cut the ripest clusters, these
Sun-colored as your round throat’s loveliness,
And hide them in your dress
To share them yonder under the olive trees
Or the noon coolness of the cypresses.”

“Those clusters were too ripe, a purple dew
Ran down between my breasts and stained the cloth.
Take out your hand. I will not walk with you
Anywhere under trees, I would not dare.”
“My hand is trembling like a foolish moth
That touched flame.” “Yet the grapes lie sweetly there
Between my breasts.” “Come, Fauna, to the pool
Below the thicket liveoak trees, with cool

"Clear water underneath the shadowy hill
We'll wash those winestains from the well-dyed cloth."

"Dear, first will you take oath
To touch only my hands (or if you will
My lips perhaps) not more?" "I will kiss both

"Your hands and lips, come Fauna." Hand in hand
They passed through the hot vines and up the hill
Out of the sun to where clear waters stand
In a stone basin under braided leaves.
There they could smell the vineyard fragrance still,
But saw what fairy patterns the sun weaves
On standing water when his rays are shed
Through weft of tangled foliage overhead.

"Dear love your mouth is hot and you kiss more
Than lips or hands." "Sweet but no further down
Than the round throat or brown
Shoulders." "But you took oath." "I never swore."
"Ah the ground's soaking here, you'll soil my gown."

"It was already stained with shameless wine,
We'll wash it soon." "Traitor, you've torn it, too."
"O Fauna, Fauna, mine and mine
Forever." "Listen, someone's coming!" "No,
The oakleaves murmur." "Why will you undo
The girdle as well? Sweet dearest let me go,
You have nearly made me naked." "Love, love, love!"
"O kiss me now! Kill me, it is not enough,

"Why should I live?" "Ah, Fauna." So they whispered
Together in the high noon solemn and hushed.
The pulpy grapes were crushed
That lay between her breasts; a gentle lisp heard
From far of falling water charmed the flushed

Young wealth of amorous limbs trembling together;
No other sound through all the oaken grove
Moved, but their breathing. High in the bright blue weather
White awful wings kept watch lest man come near;
And other angel-ministers of love
Strode with drawn blades of metal blazing-clear

Silent through the oaks and cypresses, to guard
The sacred sleep that should come afterward.
“Fauna, the sun to kiss your body brown,
Feel it, my mouth. Fauna but let me bite
Those secret spots and white
The sun’s lips never fondled.” “All’s your own,
You have nothing yet, all, all, O dear delight.”

As harp-music and flutes made rich for Nais
Her northward joy, noon silence more august
And timeless wreaths made this; maile leis
From fern forests above Hawaiian strands
By no keel ferried but by the instant thrust
Of divine wings were borne: no woman’s hands
Wove, odorous of the utmost ocean-west,
Those sacred wreaths; and from the sad red east

Cornflowers of Picardy with man’s blood fed,
Pansies burnt brown with orphan tears, were brought,
And hyacinths too well wrought
With letters of the weary Alas then spread
World over beyond all wings of weeping thought.

Wide-flaunting poppies from the purpled fields
Between the Marne and Meuse; and with them came
Lake Como windflowers, and the honeyed yields
Of Tuscan hillsides and Calabrian dales;
And crocuses of vari-colored flame
From Africa; but the Sicilian vales
Sent all their fairest spring, to flower again
Neither on Aetna slopes nor Enna plain.

And out of battle-islanded Switzerland,
Obeying the Mother alpine roses flew
And hard white stars that grew
Higher up than ever a chamois-hunter’s hand
Reached, on the crag-lip in the giddy blue

Above the crevassed glacier. And here gathered
Arab frankincense buds and Syrian myrrh,
With mazy seaflowers that the seafoam fathered
In warm live waters south the Hydaspien gulf,
They fell like snowflakes from the flaming air,
And frightened by the wonder Fauna's wolf
That still had watched, ran off. From the upper Nile
Came lotoses, and laurels from Lesbos isle.

Great lilies from large Asia congregated
Amazed the tolerant vintage-month with massed
Mounds of May sweet; the vast
Sky-heads of the earth-out-of-mind Himalaya mated
Their snow-buds with starved bloom Siberia cast.

And soon came homelier and more kindly blossoms,
Orchids from under the Araucanian Andes
Were forced into the beauty of Fauna's bosoms,
Through her good sleep, where the crushed grapes had lain,
But maidenly in the opening of her hand is
A white globe-tulip fainting without stain,
Fed from peninsular forests of Monterey,
And at her feet white flagflowers fainted away,

The Santa Cruz wood-irises; and brown
As her sunned body and excellent as her mouth
Was mingled a new growth,
Bronze-bells of redwood darknesses that drown
The Santa Lucian Rivers of the South.

While hermit yuccas from La Cumbre wasted
Flaked petal-wealth and faint white fragrance there,
Young sand-verbena from south shores was tasted
Intense among the perfumes, native poppies
Paled in the splendor of the spun-gold hair,
Wild yellow violets of the liveoak coppice
Flowered up through all, strange-shapen and blood-red
Were phallic snowplants on the perfumed bed
Strown for a laughing symbol; from the south
They also, from the firforest that grows
About Bear Lake or close
Under cold Grayback; and with that uncouth

Male flower mated the moist and female rose.

And crested serpents from the vineyard creeping,
And cold striped snakes out of the cistern came,
And pierced the flowers and found the lovers sleeping
In sacred joy; with jewel-like eyes they gazed,
And fondled them with forked tongues aflame,
And drunk with blended fragrances upraised
Each one his dainty hard and carved head
To hiss good blessings on the bridal bed.

So from new moon until the next moon quickened
Innumerable incorruptible
The flowers remained, nor fell
A single petal nor one perfume sickened.
Fair lovers in the favored bed farewell.

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The Songs of the Dead Men to the Three Dancers

I. TO DESIRE.

(Here a dancer enters and dances.

Who is she that is fragrant and desirable,
Clothed but enough to wake wantonness,
And proud of her polished lithe body and her narrowing of kohl-darkened
eyelids with arrows between them?
Ah, ah, ah! Goddess of the world,
Young serpent in the veins of the rock,
In the mountain of jewels a young serpent, in the veins of a man a sweet viper
all emerald: ah Goddess
Are we proof to the hilt, are you pleased with us
When the splendor of your undulant insolence
Pricks the dark entrails of death, his foregathered grow hot for you, the skeleton
stands up to be amorous?
Ah, ah, ah! Goddess of the flesh
Will you think it a gift lacking grace
That the gates of the grave have been battered before you, the iron doors to us
dead in the deepest abyss?
For who has gone down to the dead or has touched them?
Did Jesus of Nazareth when he lay in deep hell
For three days and since lived as they say and has failed us?
No man nor no woman has gone down to us dead
Living until now, but the proof is here now, ah beautiful torture us again and
again.
We are fleshless, we tremble to your flesh,
Dear Goddess to taste of the dew
On your arms when you dance or to lip at the glitter of your burnished thighs
or the breast of your barrenness.
In the book of your triumphs with no term
Inscribe a more wonderful deed,
That you quickened the dead, that you lifted the flesh of the fleshless, ah
Goddess, ah! dancing, us dead men.
(The dancer goes out.

II. TO DEATH.

(A second dancer enters and dances.

Was it lovely to lie among violets ablossom in the valleys of love on the breast of
the South?

It was lovely but lovelier now

To behold the calm head of the dancer we dreaded, his curls are as tendrils of
the vineyard, O Death

Sweet and more sweet is your dancing.

Like the swoon of fulfilment of love in some lonelier vale among flowers is the
languor that flushes us,

O why did we fear him, for Death

Is a beautiful youth and his eyes are sleepy, the lids droop heavily with wine
when he wakens,

And his breast is more smooth than a dove's.

Fair Garda, gay water with olives engarlanded, lake of blue laughter in a bay of
the Alps

It is better for our spirits to be here

In the desolate hollows of darkness beholding the beauty of our dancer than at
rest on your hills

Of anemone and jonquils immingled.

And gay from the glacier womb, boy-throated for gladness to shout where the
snow-crag throng

Ran foaming the rivulet Rhone,

When the mountains were sprung for his passage, the ridges of granite were
splintered; and lovely the lake was

Under the vineyards of Vaud,

And at evening empurpling the peaks of the Chablais were painted on the sleep
and deep shadow of its waters

When the sundown was flame on la Dôle.

But the best of the course is the last broad slumber, O river of France to forget
and go down

Slow-gliding and sultrily stagnant

Past Arles to the Gulf of the Lion and that azure and beautiful grave in the
waves of the south

That are warmest and best... and an end...

(The dancer has gone out.

III. TO VICTORY.

(A third dancer enters and dances.

Use us again, you in the world only of goddesses worshipful now or adored,
Helmeted victory!
How did we bow, even in dream, visions betraying us, unto some other and
base
Power when your splendor there
Struck on the gates? Use us again, awfully beautiful. Blood will reblossom from
death
Burning to minister
All its revived fire at your feet, only to merit an eye-glance, or flash of your
hand's
Gauntleted majesty.
Pounding of guns clear you a path, trample the ports of decision and triumph
on the slain.
Men when they fall in it
Gayly they die, scattering for flowers rosy and white at your feet the red blood
and pale brains
Carpeting battlefields.
Towering in steel, terribly armed, which of the daughters of heaven is so hotly
desired?
None has embraced you yet,
All of us burn, beautifully mad, frantic with lust of your beauty and with thirst
of your mouth's
Terrible maidenhood;
Holy and white, under the steel, hide the sweet limbs of our longing desire in a
deep
Sacred virginity.
Emperors and lords gave her in vain cities of gold and whole nations of blood,
for she took
Gifts, but rejected them.
Neither a king's bribe nor a bold armorer's hammer prevails to unrivet the steel
Belt of her maidenhood,
Yet shall our prayer surely be heard. Goddess of glory revoke our exemption of
death,
Twice let us die for you.
Use us again, though but an hour: surely the prayer is as humble as the gift
would be great,
Helmeted Victory.
(The dancer goes out.

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To His Father

Christ was your lord and captain all your life,
He fails the world but you he did not fail,
He led you through all forms of grief and strife
Intact, a man full-armed, he let prevail
Nor outward malice nor the worse-fanged snake
That coils in one's own brain against your calm,
That great rich jewel well guarded for his sake
With coronal age and death like quieting balm.
I Father having followed other guides
And oftener to my hurt no leader at all,
Through years nailed up like dripping panther hides
For trophies on a savage temple wall
Hardly anticipate that reverend stage
Of life, the snow-wreathed honor of extreme age.

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The Truce and the Peace

(November, 1918.)

Peace now for every fury has had her day,
Their natural make is moribund, they cease,
They carry the inward seeds of quick decay,
Build breakwaters for storm but build on peace.
The mountains' peace answers the peace of the stars,
Our petulances are cracked against their term.
God built our peace and plastered it with wars,
Those frescoes fade, flake off, peace remains firm.
In the beginning before light began
We lay or fluttered blind in burdened wombs,
And like that first so is the last of man,
When under death for husband the amorous tombs
Are covered and conceive; nine months go by
No midwife called, nine years no baby's cry.

Peace now, though purgatory fires were hot
They always had a heart something like ice
That coldly peered and wondered, suffering not,
Nor pleased in any park, nor paradise
Of slightly swelling breasts and beautiful arms
And throat engorged with very carnal blood.
It coldly peered and wondered, "Strong God your charms
Are glorious, I remember solitude.
Before youth towered we knew a time of truth
To have eyes was nearly rapture." Peace now, for war
Will find the cave that childhood found and youth.
Ten million lives are stolen and not one star
Dulled; wars die out, life will die out, death cease,
Beauty lives always and the beauty of peace.

Peace to the world in time or in a year,
In the inner world I have touched the instant peace.
Man's soul's a flawless crystal coldly clear,
A cool white mansion that he yields in lease
To tenant dreams and tyrants from the brain
And riotous burnings of the lovelier flesh.
We pour strange wines and purples all in vain.

The crystal remains pure, the mansion fresh.
All the Asian bacchanals and those from Thrace
Lived there and left no wine-mark on the walls.
What were they doing in that more sacred place
All the Asian and the Thracian bacchanals?
Peace to the world to-morrow or in a year,
Peace in that mansion white, that crystal clear.

Peace now poor earth. They fought for freedom's sake,
She was starving in a corner while they fought.
They knew not whom they stabbed by Onega Lake,
Whom lashed from Archangel, whom loved, whom sought.
How can she die, she is the blood unborn,
The energy in earth's arteries beating red,
The world will flame with her in some great morn,
The whole great world flame with her, and we be dead.
Here in the west it grows by dim degrees,
In the east flashed and will flame terror and light.
Peace now poor earth, peace to that holier peace
Deep in the soul held secret from all sight.
That crystal, the pure home, the holier peace,
Fires flaw not, scars the cruellest cannot crease.

South of the Big Sur River up the hill
Three graves are marked thick weeds and grasses heap,
Under the forest there I have stood still
Hours, thinking it the sweetest place to sleep...
Strewing all-sufficient death with compliments
Sincere and unrequired, coveting peace...
Boards at the head not stones, the text's rude paints
Mossed, rain-rubbed... wasting hours of scanty lease
To admire their peace made perfect. From that height
But for the trees the whole valley might be seen,
But for the heavy dirt, the eye-pits no light
Enters, the heavy dirt, the grass growing green
Over the dirt, the molelike secretness,
The immense withdrawal, the dirt, the quiet, the peace.

Women cried that morning, bells rocked with mirth,
We all were glad a long while afterward,
But still in dreary places of the earth

A hundred hardly fed shall labor hard
To clothe one belly and stuff it with soft meat,
Blood paid for peace but still those poor shall buy it,
This sweat of slaves is no good wine but yet
Sometimes it climbs to the brain. Be happy and quiet,
Be happy and live, be quiet or God might wake.
He sleeps in the mountain that is heart of man's heart,
He also in promontory fists, and make
Of stubborn-muscled limbs, he will not start
For a little thing... his great hands grope, uncloze,
Feel out for the main pillars... pull down the house...
After all, after all we endured, who has grown wise?
We take our mortal momentary hour
With too much gesture, the derisive skies
Twinkle against our wrongs, our rights, our power.
Look up the night, starlight's a steadying draught
For nerves at angry tension. They have all meant well,
Our enemies and the knaves at whom we've laughed,
The liars, the clowns in office, the kings in hell,
They have all meant well in the main... some of them tried
The mountain road of tolerance... They have made war,
Conspired, oppressed, robbed, murdered, lied and lied,
Meant well, played the loud fool... and star by star
Winter Orion pursues the Pleiades
In pale and huge parade, silence and peace.

That ice within the soul, the admonisher
Of madness when we're wildest, the unwinking eye
That measures all things with indifferent stare,
Choosing far stars to check near objects by,
That quiet lake inside and underneath,
Strong, undisturbed by any angel of strife,
Being so tranquil seems the presence of death,
Being so central seems the essence of life.
Is it perhaps that death and life make truce
In neutral zone while their old feud beyond
Fires the towering cities? Surely for a strange use
He sphered that eye of flawless diamond.
It does not serve him but with line and rod
Measures him, how indeed should God serve God?

It does not worship him, it will not serve.
And death and life within that Eye combine,
Within that only untorturable nerve
Of those that make a man, within that shrine
Which there is nothing ever can profane,
Where life and death are sister and brother and lovers,
The golden voice of Christ were heard in vain,
The holy spirit of God visibly hovers.
Small-breasted girls, lithe women heavy-haired,
Loves that once grew into our nerves and veins,
Yours Freedom was desire that deeper dared
To the citadel where mastery remains,
Yours to the spirit... discount the penny that is
Ungivable, this Eye, this God, this Peace.

All in a simple innocence I strove
To give myself away to any power,
Wasting on women's bodies wealth of love,
Worshipping every sunrise mountain tower;
Some failure mocked me still denying perfection,
Parts of me might be spende'd not the whole,
I sought of wine surrender and self-correction,
I failed, I could not give away my soul.
Again seeking to give myself I sought
Outward in vain through all things, out through God,
And tried all heights, all gulfs, all dreams, all thought.
I found this wisdom on the wonderful road,
The essential Me cannot be given away,
The single Eye, God cased in blood-shot clay.

Peace to the world in time or in a year,
But always all our lives this peace was ours.
Peace is not hard to have, it lies more near
Than breathing to the breast. When brigand powers
Of anger or pain or the sick dream of sin
Break our soul's house outside the ruins we weep.
We look through the breached wall, why there within
All the red while our peace was lying asleep.
Smiling in dreams while the broad knives drank blood,
The robbers triumphed, the roof burned overhead,
The eternal living and untroubled God

Lying asleep upon a lily bed.
Men screamed, the bugles screamed, walls broke in the air,
We never knew till then that He was there.

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Natural Music

The old voice of the ocean, the bird-chatter of little rivers,
(Winter has given them gold for silver
To stain their water and bladed green for brown to line their banks)
From different throats intone one language.
So I believe if we were strong enough to listen without
Divisions of desire and terror
To the storm of the sick nations, the rage of the hunger-smitten cities,
Those voices also would be found
Clean as a child's; or like some girl's breathing who dances alone
By the ocean-shore, dreaming of lovers.

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Point Joe

Point Joe has teeth and has torn ships; it has fierce and solitary beauty;
Walk there all day you shall see nothing that will not make part of a poem.

I saw the spars and planks of shipwreck on the rocks, and beyond the desolate
Sea-meadows rose the warped wind-bitten van of the pines, a fog-bank vaulted

Forest and all, the flat sea-meadows at that time of year were plated
Golden with the low flower called footsteps of the spring, millions of flowerets,

Whose light suffused upward into the fog flooded its vault, we wandered
Through a weird country where the light beat up from earthward, and was
golden.

One other moved there, an old Chinaman gathering seaweed from the
sea-rocks,
He brought it in his basket and spread it flat to dry on the edge of the meadow.

Permanent things are what is needful in a poem, things temporally
Of great dimension, things continually renewed or always present.

Grass that is made each year equals the mountains in her past and future;
Fashionable and momentary things we need not see nor speak of.

Man gleaned food between the solemn presences of land and ocean,
On shores where better men have shipwrecked, under fog and among flowers,

Equals the mountains in his past and future; that glow from the earth was only
A trick of nature's, one must forgive nature a thousand graceful subtleties.

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Point Pinos and Point Lobos

I

A lighthouse and a graveyard and gaunt pines
Not old, no tree lives long here, where the northwind
Has forgot mercy. All night the light blinks north,
The Santa Cruz mountain redwoods hate its flashing,
The night of the huge western water takes it,
The long rays drown a little off shore, hopelessly
Attempting distance, hardly entering the ocean.
The lighthouse, and the gaunt boughs of the pines,
The carved gray stones, and the people of the graves.

They came following the sun, here even the sun is bitter,
A scant gray heartless light down wind, glitter and sorrow,
The northwind fog much kindlier. When shall these dead arise,
What day stand up from the earth among the broken pines?
A God rearisen will raise them up, this walking shadow?
Which tortured trunk will you choose, Lord, to be hewn to a cross?
I am not among the mockers Master, I am one of your lovers,
Ah weariest spirit in all the world, we all have rest
Being dead but you still strive, nearly two thousand years
You have wrestled for us against God, were you not conquered
At the first close, when the long horrible nails went home
Between the slender bones of the hands and feet, you frightfully
Heightened above man's stature saw the hateful crowd
Shift and sicken below, the sunburnt legionaries
Draw back out of the blood-drops... Far off the city
Slid on its hill, the eyes fainting. The earth was shaken
And the sun hid, you were not quieted. Men may never
Have seen you as they said in the inner room of the house,
Nor met you on the dusty suburb road toward Emmaus,
But nine years back you stood in the Alps and wept for Europe,
To-day pale ghost you walk among the tortured pines
Between the graves here and the sea.

Ah but look seaward,
For here where the land's charm dies love's chain falls loose, and the freedom of
the eyes and the fervor of the spirit
Sea-hawks wander the huge gray water, alone in a nihilist simplicity, cleaner
than the primal
Wings of the brooding of the dove on the waste of the waters beginning,
perplexed with creation; but ours
Turned from creation, returned from the beauty of things to the beauty of
nothing, to a nihilist simplicity,
Content with two elements, the wave and the cloud, and if one were not there
then the other were lovelier to turn to,
And if neither... O shining of night, O eloquence of silence, the mother of the
stars, the beauty beyond beauty,
The sea that the stars and the sea and the mountain bones of the earth and
men's souls are the foam on, the opening
Of the womb of that ocean.

You have known this, you have known peace, and forsaken
Peace for pity, you have known the beauty beyond beauty
And the other shore of God. You will never again know them,
Except he slay you, the spirit at last, as more than once
The body, and root out love. Is it for this you wander
Tempting him through the thickets of the wolvisish world?
O a last time in the last wrench of man made godlike
Shall God not rise, bitterly, the power behind power, the last star
That the stars hide, rise and reveal himself in anger—
Christ, in that moment when the hard loins of your ancient
Love and unconquerable will crack to lift up humanity
The last step heavenward—rise and slay, and you and our children
Suddenly stumble on peace? The oceans we shall have tamed then
Will dream between old rocks having no master, the earth
Forget corn, dreaming her own precious weeds and free
Forests, from the rivers upward; our tributary planets
Tamed like the earth, the morning star and the many-mooned
Three-belted giant, and those red sands of Mars between them,
Rust off the metal links of human conquest, the engines
Rust in the fields, and under that old sun's red waning
Nothing forever remember us.

And you at peace then
Not walk by a lighthouse on a wild north foreland

Choosing which trunk of the poor wind-warped pines
Will hew to a cross, and your eye's envy searching
The happiness of these bleak burials. Unhappy brother
That high imagination mating mine
Has gazed deeper than graves: is it unendurable
To know that the huge season and wheel of things
Turns on itself forever, the new stars pass
And the old return and find out their old places,
And these gray dead infallibly shall arise
In the very flesh... But first the camel bells
Tinkle into Bethlehem, the men from the east
Gift you sweet-bedded between Mary's breasts,
And no one in the world has thought of Golgotha.

II

Gray granite ridges over swinging pits of sea, pink stone-crop spangles
Stick in the stone, the stiff plates of the cypress-boughs divide the sea's breath,
Hard green cutting soft gray... I know the uplands
And windy pastures where the great globes of the oaks are like green planets
Each in his place; I know the scents and resonances of desolate hills,
The wide-winged shadows of the vultures wandering across them; and I have
visited
Deserts and many-colored rocks... mountains I know
From the Dent d'Oche in Savoy and that peak of the south past St. Gingolphe
To Grayback and Tahoma... as for sea-borderers
The caverned Norman cliffs north of the Seine's mouth, the Breton sea-heads,
the Cornish
Horns of their west had known me as a child before I knew Point Dume or
Pinos
Or Sur, the sea-light in his forehead: also I heard my masters
Speak of Pelorum head and the Attic rocks of Sunium, or that Nymphaean
Promontory under the holy mountain Athos, a warren of monks
Walls in with prayer-cells of old stone, perpetual incense and religion
Smoke from it up to him who is greater than they guess, through what huge
emptiness
And chasms above the stars seeking out one who is here already, and neither
Ahunting nor asleep nor in love; and Actium and the Acroceraunian
And Chersonese abutments of Greek ridges on the tideless wave
They named, my spirit has visited... there is no place

Taken like this out of deep Asia for a marriage-token, this planted
Asiaward over the west water. Our race nor the great springs we draw from,
Not any race of Europe, nor the Syrian blood from south of Lebanon
Our fathers drank and mixed with ours, has known this place nor its like nor
suffered

The air of its religion. The elder shapes and shows in extreme Asia,
Like remote mountains over immeasurable water, half seen, thought clouds,
Of God in the huge world from the Altai eagle-peaks and Mongol pastures
To the home of snow no wing inhabits, temples of height on earth, Gosainthan
And Gaurisankar north of Ganges, Nanda Devi a mast of the ship
We voyage upon among the stars; and the earth-sprung multitudes of India,
Where human bodies grow like weeds out of the earth, and life is nothing,
There is so much life, and like the people the divinities of the people
Swarm, and the vulgar worship; thence far east to the islands of this ocean
Our sun is buried in, theirs born of, to the noble slope of the lone peak
Over Suruga Bay, and the headlands of Hai-nan: God without name,
God without form, the Lord of Asia, is here as there.

Serenely smiling

Face of the godlike man made God, who tore the web of human passions
As a yellow lion the antelope-hunter's net, and freeing himself made free
All who could follow, the tissue of new births and deaths dissolved away from
him,

He reunited with the passionless light sky, not again to suffer
The shame of the low female gate, freed, never to be born again,
Whom Maha Maya bore in the river garden, the Himalayan barrier northward
Bounding the world: is it freedom, smile of the Buddha, surely freedom? For
someone

Whispered into my ear when I was very young, some serpent whispered
That what has gone returns; what has been, is; what will be, was; the future
Is a farther past; our times he said fractions of arcs of the great circle;
And the wheel turns, nothing shall stop it nor destroy it, we are bound on the
wheel,

We and the stars and seas, the mountains and the Buddha. Weary tidings
To cross the weary, bitter to bitter men: life's conqueror will not fear
Life; and to meditate again under the sacred tree, and again
Vanquish desire will be no evil.

The evening opens
Enormous wings out of the west, the sad red splendid light beats upward
These granite gorges, the wind-battered cypress trees blacken above them,
The divine image of my dream smiles his immortal peace, commanding
This old sea-garden, crumble of granite and old buttressed cypress trunks,
And the burnt place where that wild girl whose soul was fire died with her
house.

III

I have spoken on sea-forelands with the lords of life, the men wisdom made
Gods had nothing
So wise to tell me nor so sweet as the alternation of white sunlight and brown
night,
The beautiful succession of the breeding springs, the enormous rhythm of the
stars' deaths
And fierce renewals: O why were you rebellious, teachers of men, against the
instinctive God,
One striving to overthrow his ordinances through love and the other
crafty-eyed to escape them
Through patient wisdom: though you are wiser than all men you are foolisher
than the running grass,
That fades in season and springs up in season, praising whom you blame.

For the essence and the end
Of his labor is beauty, for goodness and evil are two things and still variant, but
the quality of life as of death and of light
As of darkness is one, one beauty, the rhythm of that Wheel, and who can
behold it is happy and will praise it to the people.

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Not Our Good Luck

Not our good luck nor the instant peak and fulfillment of time gives us to see
The beauty of things, nothing can bridle it.
God who walks lightning-naked on the Pacific has never been hidden from any
Puddle or hillock of the earth behind us.
Between the mean mud tenements and huddle of the filth of Babylon the river
Euphrates;
And over the tiled brick temple buttresses
And the folly of a garden on arches, the ancients simple and silent tribe of the
stars
Filed, and for all her gods and the priests' mouths
God also moved on the city; or a certain young tribesman come down from the
mountains of the north
Espied him in the eyes of a temple harlot;
Whom presently, as then, when the priests have choked him with perfume
some prophet like a desert camel
Shall talk with in the ridges above the rock-tombs.

Dark ships drawing in from the sundown and the islands of the south, great
waves with gray vapor in your hollows
And whitening of high heads coming home from the west,
From Formosa or the skerries of Siberia and the sight of the eyes that have
widened for the sky-peaks of Asia:
That he touched you is no wonder, that you slid from his hand
Is an old known tale to our foreland cypresses, no news to the Lobos granite, no
marvel
To Point Pinos Light and the beacon at Point Sur,
But here is the marvel, he is nowhere not present, his beauty, it is burning in the
midland villages
And tortures men's eyes in the alleys of cities.

Far-flown ones, you children of the hawk's dream future when you lean from a
crag of the last planet on the ocean
Of the far stars, remember we also have known beauty.

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The Cycle

The clapping blackness of the wings of pointed cormorants, the great indolent
 planes
 Of autumn pelicans nine or a dozen strung shorelong,
 But chiefly the gulls, the cloud-calligraphers of windy spirals before a storm,
 Cruise north and south over the sea-rocks and over
 That bluish enormous opal; very lately these alone, these and the clouds
 And westerling lights of heaven, crossed it; but then
 A hull with standing canvas crept about Point Lobos... now all day long the
 steamers
 Smudge the opal's rim; often a seaplane troubles
 The sea-wind with its throbbing heart. These will increase, the others diminish;
 and later
 These will diminish; our Pacific have pastured
 The Mediterranean torch and passed it west across the fountains of the
 morning;
 And the following desolation that feeds on Crete
 Feed here; the clapping blackness of the wings of pointed cormorants, the great
 sails
 Of autumn pelicans, the gray sea-going gulls,
 Alone will streak the enormous opal, the earth have peace like the broad water,
 our blood's
 Unrest have doubled to Asia and be peopling
 Europe again, or dropping colonies at the morning star: what moody traveller
 Wanders back here, watches the sea-fowl circle
 The old sea-granite and cemented granite with one regard, and greets my ghost,
 One temper with the granite, bulking about here?

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Salmon-Fishing

The days shorten, the south blows wide for showers now,
The south wind shouts to the rivers,
The rivers open their mouths and the salt salmon
Race up into the freshet.
In Christmas month against the smoulder and menace
Of a long angry sundown,
Red ash of the dark solstice, you see the anglers,
Pitiful, cruel, primeval,
Like the priests of the people that built Stonehenge,
Dark silent forms, performing
Remote solemnities in the red shallows
Of the river's mouth at the year's turn,
Drawing landward their live bullion, the bloody mouths
And scales full of the sunset
Twitch on the rocks, no more to wander at will
The wild Pacific pasture nor wanton and spawning
Race up into fresh water.

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To the House

I am heaping the bones of the old mother
To build us a hold against the host of the air;
Granite the blood-heat of her youth
Held molten in hot darkness against the heart
Hardened to temper under the feet
Of the ocean cavalry that are maned with snow
And march from the remotest west.
This is the primitive rock, here in the wet
Quarry under the shadow of waves
Whose hollows mouthed the dawn; little house each stone
Baptized from that abysmal font
The sea and the secret earth gave bonds to affirm you.

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To the Rock That Will Be a Cornerstone of the House

Old garden of grayish and ochre lichen,
How long a time since the brown people who have vanished from here
Built fires beside you and nestled by you
Out of the ranging sea-wind? A hundred years, two hundred,
You have been dissevered from humanity
And only known the stubble squirrels and the headland rabbits,
Or the long-fetlocked plowhorses
Breaking the hilltop in December, sea-gulls following,
Screaming in the black furrow; no one
Touched you with love, the gray hawk and the red hawk touched you
Where now my hand lies. So I have brought you
Wine and white milk and honey for the hundred years of famine
And the hundred cold ages of sea-wind.

I did not dream the taste of wine could bind with granite,
Nor honey and milk please you; but sweetly
They mingle down the storm-worn cracks among the mosses,
Interpenetrating the silent
Wing-prints of ancient weathers long at peace, and the older
Scars of primal fire, and the stone
Endurance that is waiting millions of years to carry
A corner of the house, this also destined.
Lend me the stone strength of the past and I will lend you
The wings of the future, for I have them.
How dear you will be to me when I too grow old, old comrade.

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To the Stone-Cutters

Stone-cutters fighting time with marble, you foredefeated
Challengers of oblivion
Eat cynical earnings, knowing rock splits, records fall down,
The square-limbed Roman letters
Scale in the thaws, wear in the rain. The poet as well
Builds his monument mockingly;
For man will be blotted out, the blithe earth die, the brave sun
Die blind and blacken to the heart:
Yet stones have stood for a thousand years, and pained thoughts found
The honey of peace in old poems.

Publication. *Tamar and Other Poems* (Peter G. Boyle, 1924), in its original sequence.

Provenance. Text checked against the Robinson Jeffers Association's corrected public-domain 1925 witness; the 2025 textual genealogy establishes the 1924 contents and order.

Suicide's Stone

Peace is the heir of dead desire,
Whether abundance killed the cormorant
In a happy hour, or sleep or death
Drowned him deep in dreamy waters,
Peace is the ashes of that fire,
The heir of that king, the inn of that journey.

This last and best and goal: we dead
Hold it so tight you are envious of us
And fear under sunk lids contempt.
Death-day greetings are the sweetest.
Let trumpets roar when a man dies
And rockets fly up, he has found his fortune.

Yet hungering long and pitiaibly
That way, you shall not reach a finger
To pluck it unripe and before dark
Creep to cover: life broke ten whipstocks
Over my back, broke faith, stole hope,
Before I denounced the covenant of courage.

Publication. *Tamar and Other Poems* (Peter G. Boyle, 1924), in its original sequence.

Provenance. Text checked against the Robinson Jeffers Association's corrected public-domain 1925 witness; the 2025 textual genealogy establishes the 1924 contents and order.

Wise Men in Their Bad Hours

Wise men in their bad hours have envied
The little people making merry like grasshoppers
In spots of sunlight, hardly thinking
Backward but never forward, and if they somehow
Take hold upon the future they do it
Half asleep, with the tools of generation
Foolishly reduplicating
Folly in thirty-year periods; they eat and laugh too,
Groan against labors, wars and partings,
Dance, talk, dress and undress; wise men have pretended
The summer insects enviable;
One must indulge the wise in moments of mockery.
Strength and desire possess the future,
The breed of the grasshopper shrills, "What does the future
Matter, we shall be dead?" Ah grasshoppers,
Death's a fierce meadowlark: but to die having made
Something more equal to the centuries
Than muscle and bone, is mostly to shed weakness.
The mountains are dead stone, the people
Admire or hate their stature, their insolent quietness,
The mountains are not softened nor troubled
And a few dead men's thoughts have the same temper.

Publication. *Tamar and Other Poems* (Peter G. Boyle, 1924), in its original sequence.

Provenance. Text checked against the Robinson Jeffers Association's corrected public-domain 1925 witness; the 2025 textual genealogy establishes the 1924 contents and order.

Continent's End

At the equinox when the earth was veiled in a late rain, wreathed with wet
poppies, waiting spring,
The ocean swelled for a far storm and beat its boundary, the ground-swell
shook the beds of granite.

I gazing at the boundaries of granite and spray, the established sea-marks, felt
behind me
Mountain and plain, the immense breadth of the continent, before me the mass
and doubled stretch of water.

I said: You yoke the Aleutian seal-rocks with the lava and coral sowings that
flower the south,
Over your flood the life that sought the sunrise faces ours that has followed the
evening star.

The long migrations meet across you and it is nothing to you, you have
forgotten us, mother.
You were much younger when we crawled out of the womb and lay in the sun's
eye on the tideline.

It was long and long ago; we have grown proud since then and you have grown
bitter; life retains
Your mobile soft unquiet strength; and envies hardness, the insolent quietness
of stone.

The tides are in our veins, we still mirror the stars, life is your child, but there is
in me
Older and harder than life and more impartial, the eye that watched before
there was an ocean.

That watched you fill your beds out of the condensation of thin vapor and
watched you change them,
That saw you soft and violent wear your boundaries down, eat rock, shift places
with the continents.

Mother, though my song's measure is like your surf-beat's ancient rhythm I
never learned it of you.
Before there was any water there were tides of fire, both our tones flow from
the older fountain.

POEMS REPRINTED FROM

Publication. *Tamar and Other Poems* (Peter G. Boyle, 1924), in its original sequence.

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AFTERWORD

Biography, recovery, and limits of the present archive

Reception and resistance

The 1924 book found the audience the first two books had not. Its violence, sexuality, Biblical pressure, landscape scale, and refusal of easy consolation made Jeffers both celebrated and controversial. The book's success also changed the reading of everything before it: the apprentice volumes became evidence of a long, difficult search for the form that Carmel finally released.

Family and witness

Una Jeffers was partner, reader, correspondent, and the central personal presence in the life behind the work. Contemporary accounts by friends, family circles, and visitors to Tor House describe a household organized around writing, children, animals, travel, and stone. Those witnesses are synthesized fully in the accompanying datasheet rather than compressed into the poem text.

A deliberately early Jeffers

Because the later career is enormous, a truly complete Jeffers volume would defeat the purpose of this series. The present edition is complete within a narrow historical claim: the first three distinct books, ending at the breakthrough of 1924.

Colophon

Compiled from the complete source scans in the Robinson Jeffers archive and newly saved Robinson Jeffers Association witnesses, August 2026. Designed to match the Julia Boynton Green volume: EB Garamond, six-by-nine-inch cream pages, mirrored margins, outside folios, linked contents, one archival section, and one poem opening per page.