

A Coast-Nightmare

I have a friend in ghostland—°
Early found, ah me, how early lost!—
Blood-red seaweeds drip along that coastland
By the strong sea wrenched and tossed.
In every creek there slopes a dead man's islet,
And such an one in every bay;
All unripened in the unended twilight:°
For there comes neither night nor day.

Unripe harvest there hath none to reap it
From the watery misty place; 10
Unripe vineyard there hath none to keep it
In unprofitable space.
Living flocks and herds are nowhere found there;
Only ghosts in flocks and shoals:
Indistinguished hazy ghosts surround there
Meteors whirling on their poles;
Indistinguished hazy ghosts abound there;
Troops, yea swarms, of dead men's souls. —

Have they towns to live in? —
They have towers and towns from sea to sea; 20

Of each town the gates are seven;
Of one of these each ghost is free.
Civilians, soldiers, seamen,
Of one town each ghost is free:
They are ghostly men those ghostly freemen:
Such a sight may you not see. —

How know you that your lover
Of death's tideless waters stoops to drink?—°
Me by night doth mouldy darkness cover,
It makes me quake to think: 30
All night long I feel his presence hover
Thro' the darkness black as ink.

Without a voice he tells me
The wordless secrets of death's deep:
If I sleep, his trumpet voice compels me
To stalk forth in my sleep:
If I wake, he hunts me like a nightmare;°
I feel my hair stand up, my body creep:
Without light I see a blasting sight there,
See a secret I must keep. 40

Autumn

I dwell alone—I dwell alone, alone,
Whilst full my river flows down to the sea,
 Gilded with flashing boats
 That bring no friend to me:
O love-songs, gurgling from a hundred throats,
 O love-pangs, let me be.

Fair fall the freighted boats which gold and stone
 And spices bear to sea:
Slim, gleaming maidens swell their mellow notes,
 Love-promising, entreating—
 Ah! sweet, but fleeting—
 Beneath the shivering, snow-white sails.
Hush! the wind flags and fails—
Hush! they will lie becalmed in sight of strand—
 Sight of my strand, where I do dwell alone;
Their songs wake singing echoes in my land—
 They cannot hear me moan.

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One latest, solitary swallow flies
 Across the sea, rough autumn-tempest tost,
 Poor bird, shall it be lost?
Dropped down into this uncongenial sea,
 With no kind eyes
 To watch it while it dies,
 Ungessed, uncared for, free:
 Set free at last,
 The short pang past,
In sleep, in death, in dreamless sleep locked fast.°

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Mine avenue is all a growth of oaks,
 Some rent by thunder strokes,
Some rustling leaves and acorns in the breeze;
 Fair fall my fertile trees,
That rear their goodly heads, and live at ease.

30

A spider's web blocks all mine avenue;
 He catches down and foolish painted flies,
 That spider wary and wise.
 Each morn it hangs a rainbow strung with dew^o
 Betwixt boughs green with sap,
 So fair, few creatures guess it is a trap:
 I will not mar the web,
 Though sad I am to see the small lives ebb.

40

It shakes—my trees shake—for a wind is roused
 In cavern where it housed:
 Each white and quivering sail,
 Of boats among the water leaves
 Hollows and strains in the full-throated gale:
 Each maiden sings again—
 Each languid maiden, whom the calm
 Had lulled to sleep with rest and spice and balm.
 Miles down my river to the sea
 They float and wane,
 Long miles away from me.

50

Perhaps they say: 'She grieves,
 Uplifted, like a beacon, on her tower.'
 Perhaps they say: 'One hour
 More, and we dance among the golden sheaves.'
 Perhaps they say: 'One hour
 More, and we stand,
 Face to face, hand in hand;
 Make haste, O slack gale, to the looked-for land!'

My trees are not in flower,
 I have no bower,
 And gusty creaks my tower,
 And lonesome, very lonesome, is my strand.

60

The World

SONNET

By day she wooes me, soft, exceeding fair:
But all night as the moon so changeth she;
Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.°
By day she wooes me to the outer air,
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety:°
But through the night, a beast she grins at me,
A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie: by night she stands
In all the naked horror of the truth°
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
Is this a friend indeed; that I should sell
My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven|too, take hold on hell?°

10

'Summer is Ended'

To think that this meaningless thing was ever a rose,
Scentless, colourless, *this!*
Will it ever be thus (who knows?)
Thus with our bliss,
If we wait till the close?

Though we care not to wait for the end, there comes the end
Sooner, later, at last,
Which nothing can mar, nothing mend:
An end locked fast,
Bent we cannot re-bend.

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