

## THE SUNFLOWER

*To George Raffalovich*

**S**O, for the vision of the strong amaze,  
A Sunflower waved down above my days,  
I had no thought for the cool, dim silence then,  
Nor did any ink of mine flow through the pen  
Wherein my darling vision I record.

I was entranced in maleness to my Lord.  
He breathed upon the mirror, and desire  
Smirched it; He seized upon the seven-stringed lyre,  
And passed His hand thereover; the sistrion shook  
The air about Him, and the holy book  
He wrote in with His pen; the palimpsest  
Glowed with new life, and, with new life possessed,  
The changeling devils of the spheres arose  
To chase the image of the world that blows  
Over the face of the skies to hide the stars.  
He said: I will darkly hide behind the bars,  
And be a prisoner for the sake of man:  
I will blow upon his spirit, even as a fan

That stirs the motes a-dancing in the sun;  
I will breathe upon him, and "His will be done"  
Thy God shall say, and I shall be adored,  
And he shall bow in worship to his Lord.

And I will take two rods to juggle withal,  
And the green-circled earth shall be my ball;  
The barren mother. . . . Hush! Lend me thine ear;  
Bend low; I may not speak aloud for fear  
Any but thou should hear me, and blaspheme.  
For know, the things that be not as they seem  
Unto thine eyes are blasphemy to me,  
And, should I perish, what would come to thee? . . .

I will give thee now the long-forgotten signs;  
Speak them not loud, till I with heavenly wines  
Am drunken, and in vision speak to thee.  
That time is now; the new, soft word set free. . . .

- i. First, there shall be a Maiden, malely girt  
With the Sword of Fire beneath a Hairy Shirt;
- ii. Next there shall be for sign a Pregnant Hog,  
Wooed by the offspring of a Ram and Dog.
- iii. Then shall a Yellow Rose with Cankered Heart  
Stand in the dream, until its Light depart.
- iv. And, fourth, the Halo of the Silver Moon,  
Green-spotted, with the letter *hé* for rune.

- v. Fifthly, the Star set in a Shining Shield  
That ruddy, drunken Mars bore on the field  
When he had lain in Venus' breasts, and then
- vi. There shall be a Womb that hath borne Seven Men,  
And slain them with its Stench, and last shall rise
- vii. A Wanton White, with Green Unseeing Eyes,  
And she shall be the Thing that shall unveil  
The Mystery of the Dark; heed thou my tale,  
For I have chosen thee, who knowest not  
The sacred signs, nay, nor the sacred spot.  
But when thou knowest, slay a ram for me  
Beneath the lowest branch upon the Tree  
Of sacred Life, nor heed the Seer who comes  
To slay thee with his foul and bleeding gums,  
For he is nought to thee; nor heed the grace  
Of the Maiden with the Moon within her face:  
If she seduce thee, thou shalt be reborn  
Where thou shalt not distinguish Night from Morn,  
Where all the waters that shall quench thy thirst  
Shall be the streamlets that of old did burst  
Out of the rock at Moses' dread command.

Fear not! Thou hast a staff within thy hand  
That shall vanquish light, and make the darkness loom  
More darkly-luminous within the gloom.

Fear not, thou scribe of dread Osiris' tomb.

I was Osiris; I was sacrificed  
Upon the altar of the speechless Christ;  
And I was Isis, and her sister dumb.  
When thou wouldst call me, seven times strike the drum;  
One stroke on the sistron shall suffice. I dwell  
Upon the borders of the seventh hell  
And the second world whereon we planted man  
In the primal light. From me the secret ran  
Through the æthyr, till a greater god arose,  
And stole the earth by standing on his toes  
And blowing through the air; the sky grew blue,  
And the stars silver, and his dawn was new  
Upon the altar of the sun: this lord  
Is dead to earth, and I shall be adored.

Take thou the prophecy, and set it down,  
Ere thou summon me from the spheres of Blue and  
    Brown;  
Take a red rose-leaf and a sword of fire,  
And say: "I am the guardian of desire,  
And summon thee to appear." Upon the lyre  
Strike seven, and thirty-two upon the drum,  
And, thou whom I have chosen, I will come.

Let not the fear of me abase thy pride;  
I seek thee for a bridegroom; I, the bride,  
Shall come to thee, unsought; be kind to her  
Who comes to thee bearing a Sunflower.

And the two Rods shall strike, and there shall be  
A mighty fire in heaven to set me free  
From prison; sleep thou seven days again,  
Until I bear the light into thy brain:  
And thou art weary,—but await my word.  
I go as Thunder, that came but as a Bird.

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