

VII

The Vampire

I

Let me away ! Then is it not enough
That you have won me to your wickedness ?
That we have touched the strange and sexless love
Whose heart is death ? That you and I express
The poison of a thousand evil flowers
And drain that cup of bitterness, my Lola ?
That you have killed my safe and sunny hours —
A Venus to seduce Savonarola !
Why have you taken this most monstrous shape,
Imperious malison and hate flung after ?
You clutch me like a gross lascivious ape,
And like a gloating devil's rings the laughter.
O sweet my maid, bethink yourself awhile !
Recall the glad kiss and the gentle smile !

II

Where are you ? Who am I ? O who am I ?
 Why do I lie and let you ? I was strong —
 I was so strong I might have bid you die
 With one swift arrow from my quiver, song.
Now you are over me ; you hold me here ;
 You grip my flesh till bleeding bruises start ;
 You threaten me with — can I name the fear ?
 I always knew you never had a heart.
God ! who am I ? My Lola, speak to me !
 Tell me you love me ; tell me — I am dazed
 With something terrible and strange I see
 Even in the mouth that kissed, the lips that praised.
You leer above me like a brooding fiend
 Waiting to leap upon a babe unweaned.

III

Kiss me at least ! We always were good friends —
Kiss me for old times' sake — Kiss me just once !
I know this ends — as every sweet thing ends !
But — say you are not angry ! Ere you pounce,
Forgive me ! You could make me glad to die,
I think, if you would only kill me kindly.
Just one swift razor-stroke — cut low ! — and I
Would pass the portal happily and blindly.
Yes ! I would like to think the fountain sprang
Straight from my throat and slaked your aching thirst,
Shot to your hot red heart one red hot pang,
Then left you cool and smiling as at first.
I give you freely my heart's agony.
But oh ! oh ! speak to me ! do speak to me !

IV

God ! do not wait then ! kill me now ; have done !
 Why do you watch me mute and immobile,
 Sitting like death between me and the sun,
 A sphinx with eyes of jade and jaws of steel ?
Let me rise up to kneel to you and pray !
 I hate this hell of agony supine.
 You killed her yesterday ; kill me to-day ;
 Let me not hang like Christ ! Now snap my spine !
Surely you know the trick – when from your lips
 I see a thin chill stream of stark black blood
 Trickling, the stream of hate that glows and grips
 My lesser life within its sickening flood.
Be pitiful, and end your cruelty !
 Suck out the life of me, that I may die !

V

O brooding vampire, why art thou arisen ?
Why art thou so unquiet in the tomb ?
Why has thy corpse burst brilliant out of prison ?
Whence get the lips their blood, the cheeks their bloom ?
Is there no garlic I may wear against thee ?
No succour in the consecrated Host ?
Nay, if thou slay not it is thou restrainst thee.
I am the virgin, thou the Holy Ghost.
There is no comfort nor defence nor peace
From thee (and all thy malice) in the world :
hou sittest through the aching centuries
Like the old serpent in his horror curled
Ready to strike home — and yet not striking
Till thou hast lipped the victim to thy liking !

VI

Am I not beautiful ? Your lithe mouth twitches
As if already you were gluttoned on
This fair firm flesh that fears you and yet itches
— You know it — for some master malison.
Perhaps you mean to let me go ? Ah sweet !
How seven times sweet if you will let me go —
Oh ! Oh ! I want to worship at your feet.
Why do you stab me with a smiling " No " ?
Say " no " at least — to see you sitting there
So dumb is madness — why then, let me go !
I will — and you sit quiet — did you dare ?
To everything the answer still is " No ! "
You coward ! Coward ! Coward ! let me rise ! —
I cannot bear the hunger in your eyes.

VII

You are afraid of me — I see it now.

 You know that if you loose me, never again

 Will I be such a fool. I wonder how

 I ever took this destiny of pain.

Loose me ! You dare not. Take your eyes away !

 You dare not. O you laugh ! You trust your power

 There you are wrong — but had you turned to-day

 I would have murdered you within the hour.

Yes ! you do well — you know the dreadful weight

 Pale silence sheds, not Atlas could uplift.

 You know the spell to conquer love and hate,

 To win the world and win it at a gift.

You are afraid of that then — had you spoken

 You fear the spell upon me had been broken !

VIII

Even that taunt has left you smiling still,
And silent still – and that is ten times worse.
Where is my will, my adamantine will?
Curse God and die ? I can nor die nor curse.
Ah, but I can. The agony extends –
I am wrapt up all in an equal hell.
There is a point at which emotion ends.
I am come through to peace, though pain yet swell
Its paeon in my every vein and nerve.
Try me, o God, convulse me to the marrow !
I am it's element ; I shall not swerve.
I am Apollo too ; I loose one arrow
Swift enough, straight enough to conquer you.
O Sphinx ! Gaze on ! I can be silent too.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IX

Now then the pressure and the pain increase,
And ever nearer grows the exulting rose
Your face ; and like a Malay with his kriss
That runs amok your passion gleams and grows.
It shakes me to the soul : by that you are stilled ;
You hold yourself together, like a man
Stabbed to the heart, who, knowing he is killed,
Lets his whole life out in his yataghan,
And strikes one masterstroke. So now you breathe
Close on my face ; you strip me of defence ;
You sing in obscure words whose crowns enwreath
My forehead with their viewless violence,
So that I lie, as at the appointed term,
Awaiting the foul kisses of the worm.

X

You close on me ; by God, you breed in me !
My flesh corrupt is tingling with the kiss
Of myriads, like the innumerable sea
In waves of life that feeds its boundless bliss
On the eroded earth. These are your thoughts,
Your living thoughts that throng my stagnant veins !
Your jackals howl among the holy courts ;
Your monster brood of devils in my brains
Laughs ; oh ! they feast on my decaying blood ;
They gnaw the last sweet morsel from my bones. —
As on the parched-up earth there flames the flood
Of the monsoon, black dust and barren stones
Leap into green, so I whose epitaph
Your passion writes, awake to live — to laugh !

XI

Even to the end of all must I resist.

New deaths, new births, each minute boiling over.

I can go on for ever, an you list –

Now, now ! O no ! I will not. O my lover !

Spare me ! Enough ! Take pity ! Mutely moans

Your mouth in little sobs and calls and cries

And catches of the breath, whose bliss atones

In once for all the long-drawn agonies.

Now that the pain swings over into pleasure,

Now that the union which is death is done,

The wine of bliss rolls out in brimming measure.

The moon is dead – all glory to the Sun !

Now, now ! Oh no ! Oh no ! I penetrate –

I pierce. Enough. God ! God ! how Thou art great !

XII

Then closer, closer. No ! – then stop – think well
What is this wonder we awake. Now think
We are cast down to the abyss of hell
Or tremble upon heaven's dizzy brink –
Which ? All's the same. Go on. No – what is this ?
Why dally ? To the hilt ! Ah mine, ah mine !
Kiss me – I cannot kiss you – kiss me ! Kiss !
Oh ! God ! Oh God ! Forgive me ; I am thine. –
Horses and chariots that champ and clang !
The roar of blazing cressets that environ
The form that fuses in the perfect pang.
A blast of air thorough the molten iron –
One scream of light. Creating silence drops
Into that silence when creation – stops.

XIII

So — e finita la commedia.

" And if the King like not the comedy "

(Twine in your hair the fallen gardenia !)

" Why then, belike he likes it not, pardie ! "

What will the " King " — the British Public — say

When they perceive their sorrow was my fun,

Their Hecuba my mocking Brinvilliers ?

I neither know nor care. What we have done

We have done. Admit, though, you are rare and rich !

This palely-wandering knight has found a flame

Both merciless and beautiful, you witch !

You play the game, and frankly, as a game !

This is the hour of prattle — tell me true !

I have never net another such. Have you ?

XIV

Yet all the comedy was tragedy.

I truly felt all that I farced to feel.

Because the wheel revolves, forsooth, shall we

Deny a top and bottom to the wheel ?

I am the centre too, and stand apart.

I am the All, who made the All, in All

Who am, being Naught. I am the bloodbright Heart.

Wreathed with the Snake, and chaos is their pall

Thou art as I ; this mystery is ours.

These blood-bought bastards of futility

Can never know us, fair and free-born flowers.

So they may say – they will – of you and me :

" These poets never know green cheese from chalk :

" This is the sort of nonsense lovers talk. "