

PROLOGUE.

OBSESSION.

TO CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

“ Car ce que ta bouche cruelle
Eparpilie en l'air,
Monstre assassin, c'est ma cervelle,
Mon sang et ma chair ! ”

THY brazen forehead, and its lustre gloom,
Great angel of Night's legion-chosen chief,
Beam on me like the hideous-fronted tomb,
Whereon are graven strange words of misbelief;
Thy brazen forehead, and its lustre gloom !

Sinister eyes, you burn into my breast,
Creating an infernal cavern of woe,
Where strange sleek leopards lash them in unrest,
And furtive serpents crawling to and fro—
Sinister eyes, you burn into my breast !

All hell, all destinies of death are written
Like litanies blaspheming in those eyes ;
And where the lightning of high God hath smitten,
Lie the charred brands of monstrous infamies,
Wherein all destinies of death are written.

Thou cam'st to obsess me first that Easter Eve,
 When, from the contemplation of His pain,
I turned to look into my own heart's heave,
 And saw the bloody nails made fast again.
Thou cam'st to obsess me first that Easter Eve !

The lustre of old jet was over thee,
 And through thy body coursed the scented blood ;
Thy flesh was full of amorous ecstasy :
 Polished, and gloomier than some black full flood,
The lustre of old jet was over thee !

In thy great brazen blackness I am bathed ;
 Through all thy veins, like curses, my blood runs ;
In all thy flesh my naked bones are swathed,
 My womb is pregnant with mad moons and suns.
In thy great brazen blackness I am bathed !

Imminent over me thy hatred hangs,
 Thy slow blood trickles on my swollen sides,
Thy curdling purple where those poison-fangs
 Struck, slays desire and only death abides.
Imminent over me thy hatred hangs !

Thy jet smooth body clung to mine awhile,
 Descending like the thunder-pregnant Night.
Ominous, black, thy secret cruel smile
 Lured me. We lay like death ; until the light
Thy jet smooth body clung to mine awhile !

Thou wast a lion as an angel then,
 In copper-glowing lands that gnaws the prey
He has regotten from the tribes of men.
 We lay like passion all that deadly day—
Thou wast a lion as an angel then!

Great angel of the brazen brows, great lover,
 Great hater of my body as my soul,
To whom I gave my life and love thrice over,
 Fill me one last caress—the poison-bowl!
Great angel of the brazen brows, great lover!