

## **Fear no more the heat o' the sun**

*(from Cymbeline)*

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:  
Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;  
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;  
Care no more to clothe and eat;  
To thee the reed is as the oak:  
The scepter, learning, physic, must  
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning flash,  
Nor the all-dreaded thunder stone;  
Fear not slander, censure rash;  
Thou hast finished joy and moan:  
All lovers young, all lovers must  
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!  
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!  
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!  
Nothing ill come near thee!  
Quiet consummation have;  
And renownèd be thy grave!

—William Shakespeare

## The Conqueror Worm

Lo! 'tis a gala night  
Within the lonesome latter years!  
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight  
In veils, and drowned in tears,  
Sit in a theatre, to see  
A play of hopes and fears,  
While the orchestra breathes fitfully  
The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,  
Mutter and mumble low,  
And hither and thither fly—  
Mere puppets they, who come and go  
At bidding of vast formless things  
That shift the scenery to and fro,  
Flapping from out their Condor wings  
Invisible Wo!

That motley drama—oh, be sure  
It shall not be forgot!  
With its Phantom chased for evermore  
By a crowd that seize it not,  
Through a circle that ever returneth in  
To the self-same spot,  
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,  
And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout,  
A crawling shape intrude!  
A blood-red thing that writhes from out  
The scenic solitude!  
It writhes!—it writhes!—with mortal pangs  
The mimes become its food,  
And seraphs sob at vermin fangs  
In human gore imbued.

Out—out are the lights—out all!  
And, over each quivering form,  
The curtain, a funeral pall,  
Comes down with the rush of a storm,  
While the angels, all pallid and wan,  
Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
That the play is the tragedy, “Man,”  
And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.

—Edgar Allan Poe

### **Leda and the Swan**

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,  
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

—W. B. Yeats

### **Desert Places**

Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast  
In a field I looked into going past,  
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,  
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.  
The woods around it have it – it is theirs.  
All animals are smothered in their lairs.  
I am too absent-spirited to count;  
The loneliness includes me unawares.  
And lonely as it is, that loneliness  
Will be more lonely ere it will be less –  
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow  
With no expression, nothing to express.  
They cannot scare me with their empty spaces  
Between stars – on stars where no human race is.  
I have it in me so much nearer home  
To scare myself with my own desert places.

—Robert Frost

## Sunrise

Ah, love, this is fear. This is fear and syllables  
and the beginnings of beauty. We have walked the city,  
a flayed animal signifying death, a hybrid god  
who sings in the desolation of filth and money  
a song the heart is heavy to receive. We mourn  
otherwise. Otherwise the ranked monochromes,  
the death-teeth of that horizon, survive us  
as we survive pleasure. What a small hope.  
What a fierce small privacy of consolation.  
What a dazzle of petals for the poor meat.

Blind, with eyes like stars, like astral flowers,  
from the purblind mating sickness of the beasts  
we rise, trout-shaken, in the gaping air,  
in terror, the scarlet sun-flash  
leaping from the pond's imagination  
of a deadly sea. Fish, mole,  
we are the small stunned creatures  
inside these human resurrections, the nights  
the city praises and defiles. From there we all  
walk slowly to the sea gathering scales,  
from the cowled whisper of the waves,  
the mensural polyphony. Small stars,  
and blind the hunger under sun,  
we turn to each other and turn to each other  
in the mother air of what we want.

That is why blind Orpheus praises love  
and why love gouges out our eyes  
and why all lovers smell their way to Dover.  
That is why innocence has so much to account for,  
why Venus appears least saintly in the attitudes of shame.  
This is lost children and the deep sweetness of the pulp,  
a blue thrumming at the formed bone, river,  
flame, quicksilver. It is not the fire  
we hunger for and not the ash. It is the still hour,  
a deer come slowly to the creek at dusk,  
the table set for abstinence, windows  
full of flowers like summer in the provinces  
vanishing when the moon's half-face pallor  
rises on the dark flax line of hills.

—Robert Hass

## **Terror**

Face-down; odor  
of dusty carpet. The grip  
of anguished stillness.

Then your naked voice, your  
head knocking the wall, sideways,  
the beating of trapped thoughts against iron.

If I remember, how is it  
my face shows  
barely a line? Am I  
a monster, to sing  
in the wind on this sunny hill

and not taste the dust always,  
and not hear  
that rending, that retching?  
How did morning come, and the days  
that followed, and quiet nights?

—Denise Levertov

### Childhood's Retreat

It's in the perilous boughs of the tree  
out of blue sky the wind  
sings loudest surrounding me.

And solitude, a wild solitude  
's revealed, fearfully, high I'd climb  
into the shaking uncertainties,

part out of longing, part daring my self,  
part to see that  
widening of the world, part

to find my own, my secret  
hiding sense and place, where from afar  
all voices and scenes come back

—the barking of a dog, autumnal burnings,  
far calls, close calls— the boy I was  
calls out to me  
here the man where I am “Look!

I've been where you

most fear to be.”

—Robert Duncan