

Track 26: Section 2, lines 112 to end

At first to her beneath the sapphire heavens
The sylvan solitude was a gorgeous dream,
An altar of the summer's splendour and fire,
115 A sky-topped flower-hung palace of the gods
And all its scenes a smile on rapture's lips
And all its voices bards of happiness.

There was a chanting in the casual wind,
There was a glory in the least sunbeam;
120 Night was a chrysoprase on velvet cloth,
A nestling darkness or a moonlit deep;
Day was a purple pageant and a hymn,
A wave of the laughter of light from morn to eve.

His absence was a dream of memory,
125 His presence was the empire of a god.

A fusing of the joys of earth and heaven,
A tremulous blaze of nuptial rapture passed,
A rushing of two spirits to be one,
A burning of two bodies in one flame.

130 Opened were gates of unforgettable bliss:
Two lives were locked within an earthly heaven
And fate and grief fled from that fiery hour.

But soon now failed the summer's ardent breath
And throngs of blue-black clouds crept through the sky
135 And rain fled sobbing over the dripping leaves
And storm became the forest's titan voice.

Then listening to the thunder's fatal crash
And the fugitive pattering footsteps of the showers
And the long unsatisfied panting of the wind
140 And sorrow muttering in the sound-vexed night,
The grief of all the world came near to her.

Night's darkness seemed her future's ominous face.
The shadow of her lover's doom arose
And fear laid hands upon her mortal heart.

145 The moments swift and ruthless raced; alarmed
Her thoughts, her mind remembered Narad's date.

A trembling moved accountant of her riches,
She reckoned the insufficient days between:
A dire expectancy knocked at her breast;
150 Dreadful to her were the footsteps of the hours:
Grief came, a passionate stranger to her gate:
Banished when in his arms, out of her sleep
It rose at morn to look into her face.

Vainly she fled into abysses of bliss
155 From her pursuing foresight of the end.

The more she plunged into love that anguish grew;

Her deepest grief from sweetest gulfs arose.
Remembrance was a poignant pang, she felt
Each day a golden leaf torn cruelly out
160 From her too slender book of love and joy.
Thus swaying in strong gusts of happiness
And swimming in foreboding's sombre waves
And feeding sorrow and terror with her heart,—
For now they sat among her bosom's guests
165 Or in her inner chamber paced apart,—
Her eyes stared blind into the future's night.
Out of her separate self she looked and saw,
Moving amid the unconscious faces loved,
In mind a stranger though in heart so near,
170 The ignorant smiling world go happily by
Upon its way towards an unknown doom
And wondered at the careless lives of men.
As if in different worlds they walked, though close,
They confident of the returning sun,
175 They wrapped in little hourly hopes and tasks,—
She in her dreadful knowledge was alone.
The rich and happy secrecy that once
Enshrined her as if in a silver bower
Apart in a bright nest of thoughts and dreams
180 Made room for tragic hours of solitude
And lonely grief that none could share or know,
A body seeing the end too soon of joy
And the fragile happiness of its mortal love.
Her quiet visage still and sweet and calm,
185 Her graceful daily acts were now a mask;
In vain she looked upon her depths to find
A ground of stillness and the spirit's peace.
Still veiled from her was the silent Being within
Who sees life's drama pass with unmoved eyes,
190 Supports the sorrow of the mind and heart
And bears in human breasts the world and fate.
A glimpse or flashes came, the Presence was hid.
Only her violent heart and passionate will
Were pushed in front to meet the immutable doom;
195 Defenceless, nude, bound to her human lot
They had no means to act, no way to save.
These she controlled, nothing was shown outside:
She was still to them the child they knew and loved;
The sorrowing woman they saw not within.
200 No change was in her beautiful motions seen:
A worshipped empress all once vied to serve,
She made herself the diligent serf of all,
Nor spared the labour of broom and jar and well,

205 Or close gentle tending or to heap the fire
Of altar and kitchen, no slight task allowed
To others that her woman's strength might do.

In all her acts a strange divinity shone:
Into a simplest movement she could bring
A oneness with earth's glowing robe of light,
210 A lifting up of common acts by love.

All-love was hers and its one heavenly cord
Bound all to all with her as golden tie.

But when her grief to the surface pressed too close,
These things, once gracious adjuncts of her joy,
215 Seemed meaningless to her, a gleaming shell,
Or were a round mechanical and void,
Her body's actions shared not by her will.

Always behind this strange divided life
Her spirit like a sea of living fire
220 Possessed her lover and to his body clung,
One locked embrace to guard its threatened mate.

At night she woke through the slow silent hours
Brooding on the treasure of his bosom and face,
Hung o'er the sleep-bound beauty of his brow
225 Or laid her burning cheek upon his feet.

Waking at morn her lips endlessly clung to his,
Unwilling ever to separate again
Or lose that honeyed drain of lingering joy,
Unwilling to loose his body from her breast,
230 The warm inadequate signs that love must use.

Intolerant of the poverty of Time
Her passion catching at the fugitive hours
Willed the expense of centuries in one day
Of prodigal love and the surf of ecstasy;
235 Or else she strove even in mortal time
To build a little room for timelessness
By the deep union of two human lives,
Her soul secluded shut into his soul.

After all was given she demanded still;
240 Even by his strong embrace unsatisfied,
She longed to cry, "O tender Satyavan,
O lover of my soul, give more, give more
Of love while yet thou canst, to her thou lov'st.

Imprint thyself for every nerve to keep
245 That thrills to thee the message of my heart.

For soon we part and who shall know how long
Before the great wheel in its monstrous round
Restore us to each other and our love?"

Too well she loved to speak a fateful word
250 And lay her burden on his happy head;

She pressed the outsurging grief back into her breast
To dwell within silent, unhelped, alone.

But Satyavan sometimes half understood,
Or felt at least with the uncertain answer
255 Of our thought-blinded hearts the unuttered need,
The unplumbed abyss of her deep passionate want.

All of his speeding days that he could spare
From labour in the forest hewing wood
And hunting food in the wild sylvan glades
260 And service to his father's sightless life
He gave to her and helped to increase the hours
By the nearness of his presence and his clasp,
And lavish softness of heart-seeking words
And the close beating felt of heart on heart.

265 All was too little for her bottomless need.

If in his presence she forgot awhile,
Grief filled his absence with its aching touch;
She saw the desert of her coming days
Imaged in every solitary hour.

270 Although with a vain imaginary bliss
Of fiery union through death's door of escape
She dreamed of her body robed in funeral flame,
She knew she must not clutch that happiness
To die with him and follow, seizing his robe
275 Across our other countries, travellers glad
Into the sweet or terrible Beyond.

For those sad parents still would need her here
To help the empty remnant of their day.

Often it seemed to her the ages' pain
280 Had pressed their quintessence into her single woe,
Concentrating in her a tortured world.

Thus in the silent chamber of her soul
Cloistering her love to live with secret grief
She dwelt like a dumb priest with hidden gods
285 Unappeased by the wordless offering of her days,
Lifting to them her sorrow like frankincense,
Her life the altar, herself the sacrifice.

Yet ever they grew into each other more
Until it seemed no power could rend apart,
290 Since even the body's walls could not divide.

For when he wandered in the forest, oft
Her conscious spirit walked with him and knew
His actions as if in herself he moved;
He, less aware, thrilled with her from afar.

295 Always the stature of her passion grew;
Grief, fear became the food of mighty love.

Increased by its torment it filled the whole world;
It was all her life, became her whole earth and heaven.

300 Although life-born, an infant of the hours,
Immortal it walked unslayable as the gods:
Her spirit stretched measureless in strength divine,
An anvil for the blows of Fate and Time:
Or tired of sorrow's passionate luxury,
305 Grief's self became calm, dull-eyed, resolute,
Awaiting some issue of its fiery struggle,
Some deed in which it might for ever cease,
Victorious over itself and death and tears.

The year now paused upon the brink of change.

310 No more the storms sailed with stupendous wings
And thunder strode in wrath across the world,
But still was heard a muttering in the sky
And rain dripped wearily through the mournful air
And grey slow-drifting clouds shut in the earth.

So her grief's heavy sky shut in her heart.

315 A still self hid behind but gave no light:
No voice came down from the forgotten heights;
Only in the privacy of its brooding pain
Her human heart spoke to the body's fate.

End of Canto One