

Track 45: Canto Three full

Now it was here in this great golden dawn.

By her still sleeping husband lain she gazed
Into her past as one about to die
Looks back upon the sunlit fields of life

5 Where he too ran and sported with the rest,
Lifting his head above the huge dark stream
Into whose depths he must for ever plunge.

All she had been and done she lived again.

10 The whole year in a swift and eddying race
Of memories swept through her and fled away
Into the irrecoverable past.

Then silently she rose and, service done,
Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved
By Satyavan upon a forest stone.

15 What prayer she breathed her soul and Durga knew.

Perhaps she felt in the dim forest huge
The infinite Mother watching over her child,
Perhaps the shrouded Voice spoke some still word.

At last she came to the pale mother queen.

20 She spoke but with guarded lips and tranquil face
Lest some stray word or some betraying look
Should let pass into the mother's unknowing breast,
Slaying all happiness and need to live,
A dire foreknowledge of the grief to come.

25 Only the needed utterance passage found:
All else she pressed back into her anguished heart
And forced upon her speech an outward peace.

“One year that I have lived with Satyavan
Here on the emerald edge of the vast woods
30 In the iron ring of the enormous peaks
Under the blue rifts of the forest sky,
I have not gone into the silences
Of this great woodland that enringed my thoughts
With mystery, nor in its green miracles
35 Wandered, but this small clearing was my world.

Now has a strong desire seized all my heart
To go with Satyavan holding his hand
Into the life that he has loved and touch
Herbs he has trod and know the forest flowers
40 And hear at ease the birds and the scurrying life
That starts and ceases, rich far rustle of boughs
And all the mystic whispering of the woods.

Release me now and let my heart have rest.”

45 She answered: “Do as thy wise mind desires,
O calm child-sovereign with the eyes that rule.

I hold thee for a strong goddess who has come
Pitying our barren days; so dost thou serve
Even as a slave might, yet art thou beyond
All that thou doest, all our minds conceive,

50 Like the strong sun that serves earth from above."
Then the doomed husband and the woman who knew
Went with linked hands into that solemn world
Where beauty and grandeur and unspoken dream,
Where Nature's mystic silence could be felt
55 Communing with the secrecy of God.

Beside her Satyavan walked full of joy
Because she moved with him through his green haunts:
He showed her all the forest's riches, flowers
Innumerable of every odour and hue
60 And soft thick clinging creepers red and green
And strange rich-plumaged birds, to every cry
That haunted sweetly distant boughs replied
With the shrill singer's name more sweetly called.

He spoke of all the things he loved: they were
65 His boyhood's comrades and his playfellows,
Coevals and companions of his life
Here in this world whose every mood he knew:
Their thoughts which to the common mind are blank,
He shared, to every wild emotion felt
70 An answer.

Deeply she listened, but to hear
The voice that soon would cease from tender words
And treasure its sweet cadences beloved
For lonely memory when none by her walked
And the beloved voice could speak no more.

75 But little dwelt her mind upon their sense;
Of death, not life she thought or life's lone end.

Love in her bosom hurt with the jagged edges
Of anguish moaned at every step with pain
Crying, "Now, now perhaps his voice will cease
80 For ever."

Even by some vague touch oppressed
Sometimes her eyes looked round as if their orbs
Might see the dim and dreadful god's approach.

But Satyavan had paused. He meant to finish
His labour here that happy, linked, uncaring
85 They two might wander free in the green deep
Primaeval mystery of the forest's heart.

A tree that raised its tranquil head to heaven
Luxuriating in verdure, summoning
The breeze with amorous wideness of its boughs,
90 He chose and with his steel assailed the arm
Brown, rough and strong hidden in its emerald dress.

Wordless but near she watched, no turn to lose
Of the bright face and body which she loved.

Her life was now in seconds, not in hours,
95 And every moment she economised
Like a pale merchant leaned above his store,
The miser of his poor remaining gold.

But Satyavan wielded a joyous axe.

And even as her pallid lips pressed his,
His failed, losing last sweetness of response;
His cheek pressed down her golden arm. She sought

150 His mouth still with her living mouth, as if
She could persuade his soul back with her kiss;
Then grew aware they were no more alone.

Something had come there conscious, vast and dire.

155 Near her she felt a silent shade immense
Chilling the noon with darkness for its back.

An awful hush had fallen upon the place:
There was no cry of birds, no voice of beasts.

160 A terror and an anguish filled the world,
As if annihilation's mystery
Had taken a sensible form.

A cosmic mind

Looked out on all from formidable eyes
Contemning all with its unbearable gaze
And with immortal lids and a vast brow
It saw in its immense destroying thought
165 All things and beings as a pitiful dream,
Rejecting with calm disdain Nature's delight,
The wordless meaning of its deep regard
Voicing the unreality of things
And life that would be for ever but never was
170 And its brief and vain recurrence without cease,
As if from a Silence without form or name
The Shadow of a remote uncaring god
Doomed to his Nought the illusory universe,
Cancelling its show of idea and act in Time
175 And its imitation of eternity.

She knew that visible Death was standing there
And Satyavan had passed from her embrace

End of Book Eight

End of Part Two