

Track 50: Section 1b, lines 275 to end

275 But Savitri answered the disdainful Shade:
“World-spirit, I was thy equal spirit born.
My will too is a law, my strength a god.
I am immortal in my mortality.
I tremble not before the immobile gaze
280 Of the unchanging marble hierarchies
That look with the stone eyes of Law and Fate.
My soul can meet them with its living fire.
Out of thy shadow give me back again
Into earth's flowering spaces Satyavan
285 In the sweet transiency of human limbs
To do with him my spirit's burning will.
I will bear with him the ancient Mother's load,
I will follow with him earth's path that leads to God.
Else shall the eternal spaces open to me,
290 While round us strange horizons far recede,
Travelling together the immense unknown.
For I who have trod with him the tracts of Time,
Can meet behind his steps whatever night
Or unimaginable stupendous dawn
295 Breaks on our spirits in the untrod Beyond.
Wherever thou leadst his soul I shall pursue.”
But to her claim opposed, implacable,
Insisting on the immutable Decree,
Insisting on the immitigable Law
300 And the insignificance of created things,
Out of the rolling wastes of night there came
Born from the enigma of the unknowable depths
A voice of majesty and appalling scorn.
As when the storm-haired Titan-striding sea
305 Throws on a swimmer its tremendous laugh
Remembering all the joy its waves have drowned,
So from the darkness of the sovereign night
Against the Woman's boundless heart arose
The almighty cry of universal Death.
310 “Hast thou god-wings or feet that tread my stars,
Frail creature with the courage that aspires,
Forgetting thy bounds of thought, thy mortal role?
Their orbs were coiled before thy soul was formed.
I, Death, created them out of my void;
315 All things I have built in them and I destroy.
I made the worlds my net, each joy a mesh.
A Hunger amorous of its suffering prey,
Life that devours, my image see in things.
Mortal, whose spirit is my wandering breath,
320 Whose transience was imagined by my smile,
Flee clutching thy poor gains to thy trembling breast

Pierced by my pangs Time shall not soon appease.

Blind slave of my deaf force whom I compel

To sin that I may punish, to desire

325 That I may scourge thee with despair and grief

And thou come bleeding to me at the last,

Thy nothingness recognised, my greatness known,

Turn nor attempt forbidden happy fields

Meant for the souls that can obey my law,

330 Lest in their sombre shrines thy tread awake

From their uneasy iron-hearted sleep

The Furies who avenge fulfilled desire.

Dread lest in skies where passion hoped to live,

The Unknown's lightnings start and, terrified,

335 Lone, sobbing, hunted by the hounds of heaven,

A wounded and forsaken soul thou flee

Through the long torture of the centuries,

Nor many lives exhaust the tireless Wrath

Hell cannot slake nor Heaven's mercy assuage.

340 I will take from thee the black eternal grip:

Clasping in thy heart thy fate's exiguous dole

Depart in peace, if peace for man is just."

But Savitri answered meeting scorn with scorn,

The mortal woman to the dreadful Lord:

345 "Who is this God imagined by thy night,

Contemptuously creating worlds disdained,

Who made for vanity the brilliant stars?

Not he who has reared his temple in my thoughts

And made his sacred floor my human heart.

350 My God is will and triumphs in his paths,

My God is love and sweetly suffers all.

To him I have offered hope for sacrifice

And gave my longings as a sacrament.

Who shall prohibit or hedge in his course,

355 The wonderful, the charioteer, the swift?

A traveller of the million roads of life,

His steps familiar with the lights of heaven

Tread without pain the sword-paved courts of hell;

There he descends to edge eternal joy.

360 Love's golden wings have power to fan thy void:

The eyes of love gaze starlike through death's night,

The feet of love tread naked hardest worlds.

He labours in the depths, exults on the heights;

He shall remake thy universe, O Death."

365 She spoke and for a while no voice replied,

While still they travelled through the trackless night

And still that gleam was like a pallid eye

Troubling the darkness with its doubtful gaze.

Then once more came a deep and perilous pause

370 In that unreal journey through blind Nought;

Once more a Thought, a Word in the void arose

And Death made answer to the human soul:

“What is thy hope? To what dost thou aspire?

375 This is thy body's sweetest lure of bliss,
Assailed by pain, a frail precarious form,
To please for a few years thy faltering sense
With honey of physical longings and the heart's fire
And, a vain oneness seeking, to embrace
The brilliant idol of a fugitive hour.

380 And thou, what art thou, soul, thou glorious dream
Of brief emotions made and glittering thoughts,
A thin dance of fireflies speeding through the night,
A sparkling ferment in life's sunlit mire?

385 Wilt thou claim immortality, O heart,
Crying against the eternal witnesses
That thou and he are endless powers and last?
Death only lasts and the inconscient Void.

I only am eternal and endure.

390 I am the shapeless formidable Vast,
I am the emptiness that men call Space,
I am a timeless Nothingness carrying all,
I am the Illimitable, the mute Alone.

I, Death, am He; there is no other God.

395 All from my depths are born, they live by death;
All to my depths return and are no more.

I have made a world by my inconscient Force.

My Force is Nature that creates and slays
The hearts that hope, the limbs that long to live.

400 I have made man her instrument and slave,
His body I made my banquet, his life my food.

Man has no other help but only Death;
He comes to me at his end for rest and peace.

I, Death, am the one refuge of thy soul.

405 The Gods to whom man prays can help not man;
They are my imaginations and my moods
Reflected in him by illusion's power.

That which thou seest as thy immortal self
Is a shadowy icon of my infinite,
Is Death in thee dreaming of eternity.

410 I am the Immobile in which all things move,
I am the nude Inane in which they cease:
I have no body and no tongue to speak,
I commune not with human eye and ear;
Only thy thought gave a figure to my void.

415 Because, O aspirant to divinity,
Thou calledst me to wrestle with thy soul,
I have assumed a face, a form, a voice.

But if there were a Being witnessing all,
How should he help thy passionate desire?

420 Aloof he watches sole and absolute,
Indifferent to thy cry in nameless calm.

His being is pure, unwounded, motionless, one.

One endless watches the unconscious scene
Where all things perish, as the foam the stars.

425 The One lives for ever.

There no Satyavan
Changing was born and there no Savitri
Claims from brief life her bribe of joy.

There love

Came never with his fretful eyes of tears,
Nor Time is there nor the vain vasts of Space.

430 It wears no living face, it has no name,
No gaze, no heart that throbs; it asks no second
To aid its being or to share its joys.

It is delight immortally alone.

If thou desirest immortality,
435 Be then alone sufficient to thy soul:
Live in thyself; forget the man thou lov'st.

My last grand death shall rescue thee from life;
Then shalt thou rise into thy unmoved source."

440 But Savitri replied to the dread Voice:
"O Death, who reasonest, I reason not,
Reason that scans and breaks, but cannot build
Or builds in vain because she doubts her work.

I am, I love, I see, I act, I will."

445 Death answered her, one deep surrounding cry:
"Know also.

Knowing, thou shalt cease to love
And cease to will, delivered from thy heart.

So shalt thou rest for ever and be still,
Consenting to the impermanence of things."

450 But Savitri replied for man to Death:
"When I have loved for ever, I shall know.

Love in me knows the truth all changings mask.

I know that knowledge is a vast embrace:
I know that every being is myself,
In every heart is hidden the myriad One.

455 I know the calm Transcendent bears the world,
The veiled Inhabitant, the silent Lord:
I feel his secret act, his intimate fire;
I hear the murmur of the cosmic Voice.

I know my coming was a wave from God.

460 For all his suns were conscient in my birth,
And one who loves in us came veiled by death.

Then was man born among the monstrous stars
Dowered with a mind and heart to conquer thee."

465 In the eternity of his ruthless will
Sure of his empire and his armoured might,
Like one disdainingly violent helpless words
From victim lips Death answered not again.

He stood in silence and in darkness wrapped,
A figure motionless, a shadow vague,
470 Girt with the terrors of his secret sword.

Half-seen in clouds appeared a sombre face;
Night's dusk tiara was his matted hair,
The ashes of the pyre his forehead's sign.

Once more a wanderer in the unending Night,
475 Blindly forbidden by dead vacant eyes,
She travelled through the dumb unhoping vasts.

Around her rolled the shuddering waste of gloom,
Its swallowing emptiness and joyless death
Resentful of her thought and life and love.

480 Through the long fading night by her compelled,
Gliding half-seen on their unearthly path,
Phantasmal in the dimness moved the three.

End of Canto Two

End of Book Nine