

## GETHSEMANE

They can not keep awake! No seventh sense  
Of sweating fear stings wide their weary eyes.  
Sleep on, poor lads! Keep what you have of dreams  
Before the rude awakening make you wise

A sibilance of silence in my ears  
Hisses my wisdom's warning and, beneath,  
A sneer of silver whispering from a purse,  
A snarl of iron rasping from a sheath.

Such metal tools as fools must mint and forge  
To buy the worthless, Sell.- the priceless man;  
Silver to cross the teller's ready palm,  
Iron to turn prediction into plan!

That Caesar's piece, struck by his heavy hand,  
Might render unto Caesar Caesar's own;  
And Caesar's war, waged by his iron will,  
Bury in secret soil contention's bone,

Has every man his price? Do men despise  
Not the betrayer - but how cheap he sold?  
Might, he who scorns, say, thirty silver coins  
Find his excuses were he offered gold?

I know my fate because I know my foe -  
Fair weather friend, to scent a storm like this!  
Who but a foe could nail me with a name?  
Who but a friend could kill me with a kiss?

Thus, he breaks faith from fear, not grasping greed,  
And counts his coins as years that might be his;  
And yet, each piece, each year, thus superscribed,  
Will tell him thirty times whose man he is.

So comes he to his choice - and I to mine;  
As all men learn, at last, that come what may  
A man must face Gethsemane alone,  
And rise alone resolved to yea or nay.

To yea or nay! Each such a tiny word  
For tempted man too shrewd to recognise  
Compliance as the wisdom of the fool,  
Defiance as the folly of the wise.

A word - a grunt - a nod - a smile - a shrug  
 Is all it takes to make a man a slave;  
 And even silence, when injustice speaks,  
 Makes coward dumb accomplice of the knave!

For power affords such rich rewards as stir  
 The eager zeal of those who serve its schemes;  
 And good men, suffering more the more they serve  
 Alas, are less than loyal to their dreams

My dreaming three and thirty years must keep  
 Their tryst with truth; and I must rise to fall,  
 Where cruel crossroads spread their tortured arms  
 That point the craven paths knaves flee or crawl.

Beneath the pascal menace of this moon,  
 The wings of darkness beat the windy skies,  
 Above the bloody lintels of the world  
 That locks deaf ears against its victims' cries.

And, son of man I do not want to die,  
 Killed like unblemished kid who takes the blame,  
 Whose very goodness draws the guilty blade  
 That bleeds the scapegoat of men's pulsing shame.

So sure so brave my lads, who have not learnt  
 That hate can pierce even the healer's palms,  
 And fill the sweetest mouth with bitter gall,  
 And cripple on the cross the kindest arms;

That truth provides no panacea for pain,  
 Nor courage turn the edge of agony;  
 The widening horror in the eyes of wounds  
 From saint and sinner weeps as bitterly.

So, childlike they look up for some wise hand  
 To reach down low and set their world to rights;  
 Till, orphaned now, soothes each the other's sobs  
 With fairy tales to fill the empty nights.

For them, when all else fails, despair may soar  
 On flights of fancy from death's down-to-earth;  
 Make gods of guides, beginnings out of ends,  
 Judge man unworthy, trusting no man's worth;

Raise medicine to miracle, and make  
 My futile murder fit some mystic plan,  
 And write my pain-wracked misery into myth -  
 Who lived and loved and suffered like a man!

And praise my blood-stained body, crippled feet,  
 Pain-gaping mouth, and aching, breaking heart.  
 With pious prayer to sing my sacrifice -  
 Whose greater love might tear the cross apart!

There is no beauty in a hanging man;  
 His broken hands can neither heal nor bless;  
 No wisdom in his last despairing words -  
 Nor will his murder make one martyr less;

For, from dead martyr's mouths new masters speak  
 The lies that living martyrs dared to scorn;  
 And bend straight truth in tangled knots to bind  
 And scourge and strangle other Christs unborn.

Their dying hope, pinned to the cruel cross,  
 I fear the ghastly faith my death might give,  
 Shrouding day's truth in cloudy mystery,  
 Living to die as they would die to live.

But this dead end was never wish of mine,  
 Who lived by love, and swore that life was sweet  
 To those who lose the world to win the earth  
 In that true triumph losers call defeat.

Poet I was, and love my parables;  
 Teacher I was, and love my various theme;  
 Healer I was, and love my "magic touch"  
 Prophet I was, and love my "mystic dream".

Such love, first leamed at that warm, flowing breast  
 Whence very milk of human kindness springs,  
 When suckling lass first teaches sucking bairn  
 That love can fill the hungry with good things.

Love in the father's rough and ready hands  
 That swing the heavy plane in hissing sweep,  
 Yet stroke with strong man's gentle tenderness  
 The tousled heads of drowsy bairns to sleep.

Love for beloved kith and loving kin,  
 Who shared the pilgrim paths in rain and shine;  
 Love of a lad and lass to whom we drank  
 Water that warmed our happy hearts like wine!

Love for all men unknown, whose crying need  
 Weeps down the winds of time its tearful fret,  
 The starved, the sick, the frightened ones who learn  
 That dawn holds not a promise but a threat.

And love of self - that self might love in turn  
 That single human self that all men share;  
 That, knowing each is all, all might escape  
 Revenge's vicious circle of despair.

This tit-for-tat of reason's common sense  
 Of calculating eye, and tooth for tooth!  
 Yet heart's uncommon sense must rule the head  
 To find forgiveness wisdom's final truth.

For reason is a craftsman who will forge  
 A chisel or a sword with equal skill;  
 Though love carve beauty from the heart of stone,  
 And hate cut to the quick, and cut to kill!

Thus, love, at last, for foes to cast out fear,  
 Both captors and their captives to release,  
 And beat to ploughshares all the tools of pain,  
 And sow the battle-fields with seeds of peace.

But, when fate's finger meets hate's ready thumb  
 To snuff the little candle of my light,  
 And darkness falls where once my witness flared,  
 Who will recall the flame that made it bright?

Sleep on, then, lads! Keep what you have of dreams  
 Of rose-drenched kingdoms rising from the sand;  
 And smack your lips in sleep as if to lick  
 The milk and honey of some promised land.

Not dreaming that I shiver in this dark  
 And feel the sweaty bleeding of my fears,  
 And lick salt lips and taste upon my tongue  
 The tang of wormwood in this cup of tears.

If I must drain it to the bitter dregs,  
 Then drink I will, before I live a lie!  
 Though I could wish a few more useful years,  
 For I would rather live for truth than die.

But, no! I hear a rumbling in the night,  
 The mumbling of their voices, and a drum  
 That beats me to my knees then to my feet!  
 Too late, too late, for now the soldiers come.

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