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# TROUBADOUR MAGAZINE

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Made green and treasur'd with trees: our love  
Dances glassy each house it touch  
On branch's each porch, each door, and this,  
As yet, a tabernacle is.

Made up of white-thorns truly interwoven:  
As if love were those cooler shades of love  
That each delights to be in the street

And open fields, and we may see 't  
Come, we'll abroad: and let it be  
The proclamation made for May.

And on no more, as we have done, by saying:  
But, my Goddess, come, let's go a-Maying.

There's not a budding boy or girl this day  
That is not up and gone to bring in May.  
A deal of youth ere this is come

## To Hiscox

We shall grow old again, and die  
Before we know our thirty;  
Our life is short, and our days run  
As fast away as does the sun;  
And, as a vapour or a drop of rain,  
Once lost, can never be found again,  
So when we part, at last we shall  
A full, long, or fasting shade,  
All love, all liking, all delight  
Love driveth with us in endless night,  
Then, while our senses, and we are but sleeping,  
Come, my Goddess, come, let's go a-Maying.

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*Just you me and poetry*

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Poetry and religion have gone hand in hand since man could speak words. It is time to grasp the religious emotions without the mysticism. That's Sunday Morning Poetry. High emotions without mysticism.

We will explore great poetry of all types every Sunday morning on all of our channels, Facebook, podcast, youtube, and [troubadourmag.com](http://troubadourmag.com). Whether you are new to poetry, love it or hate it, I assure you all who join will find their dose of wisdom and salvation in great poetry.



# SUNDAY MORNING POETRY

Just you me and some poetry



There are as many definitions of poetry as there are poets. If we search with an active mind through these poetic explorations, we can find a uniting front among them.

Here is a collection of a few thoughts that poets have had on the nature of poetry and art. The center of this work is a local poet living in Livermore, California, Maryam Khawar.

"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." -- William Wordsworth

"Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." - Percy Bysshe Shelley

"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things." -- T.S. Eliot

Poetry fettered fetters the human race.' - William Blake

# MARYAM KHAWAR

## **Artist to Artist**

How beautiful, was your mind  
and the ability to see the essence of the  
universe

I see it through you

As you pass from artist to artist

## **Near Poetry**

and maybe my love is near poetry

fickle,

misconstrued

being endlessly drafted, containing  
boundless ends.

but I will let you know

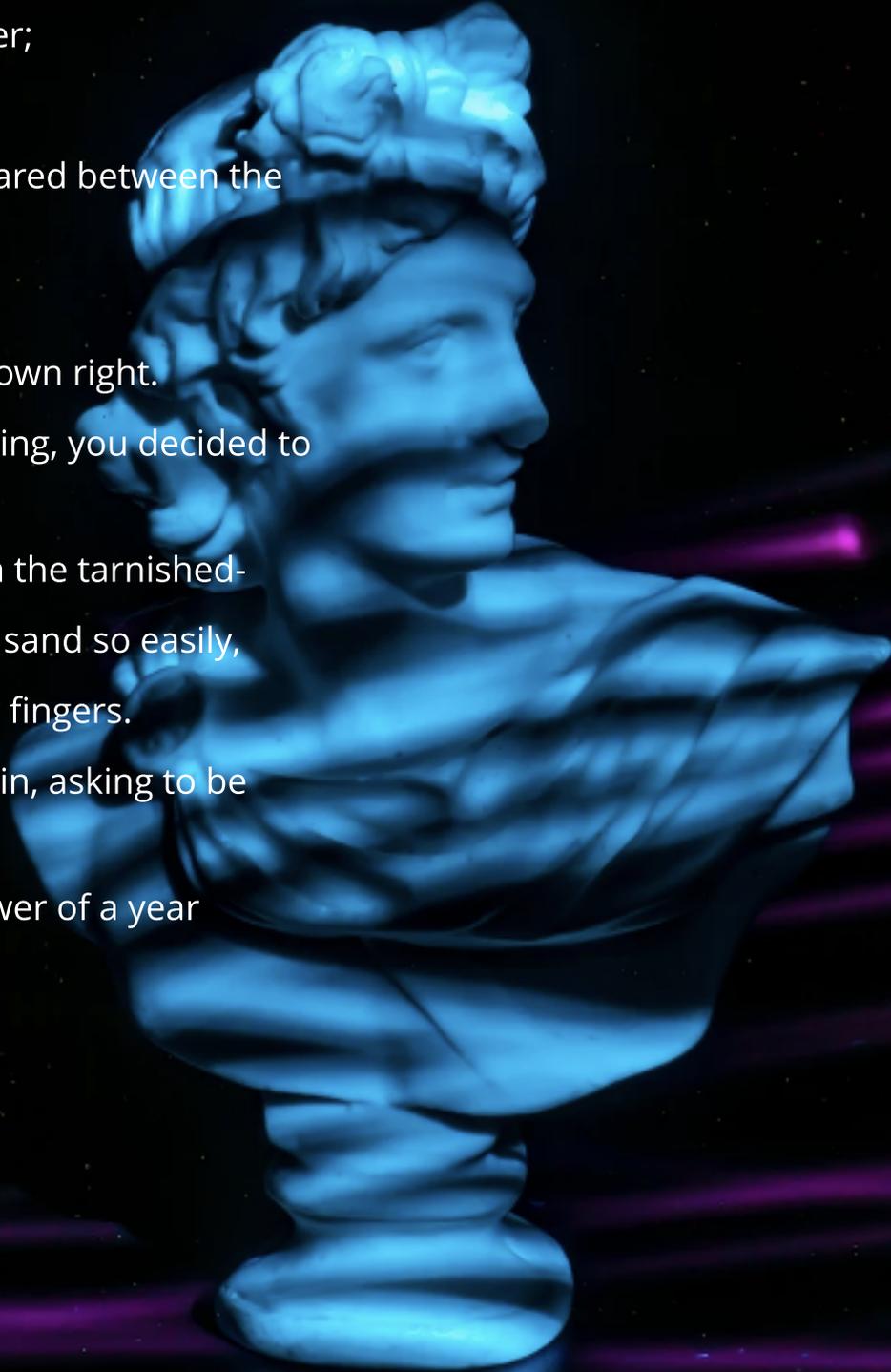
just like those unspoken words,

I keep you close, to my heart forever



# I CALLED UPON YOUR NAME

I called upon your name  
and for a year  
you did not answer;  
in the beginning,  
a promise was shared between the  
both of us.  
simple and silver  
and sacred, in its own right.  
but, without warning, you decided to  
leave  
and I was left with the tarnished-  
pieces, sifting like sand so easily,  
through unsteady fingers.  
You returned, again, asking to be  
remembered  
and I held the power of a year



# The Apology by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Think me not unkind and rude,  
That I walk alone in grove and glen;  
I go to the god of the wood  
To fetch his word to men.

Tax not my sloth that I  
Fold my arms beside the brook;  
Each cloud that floated in the sky  
Writes a letter in my book.

Chide me not, laborious band,  
For the idle flowers I brought;  
Every aster in my hand  
Goes home loaded with a thought.

There was never mystery,  
But 'tis figured in the flowers,  
Was never secret history,  
But birds tell it in the bowers.

One harvest from thy field  
Homeward brought the oxen strong;  
A second crop thine acres yield,  
Which I gather in a song.

# A CONVERSATION WITH POET MARYAM KHAWAR



I had the great pleasure of speaking with Maryam about her inspirations and her poetry. You can hear the conversation, and others like it, on the troubadour podcast. Available wherever you listen to podcasts.

Visit [troubadourmag.com](http://troubadourmag.com)





## **Under the Yew Tree by Kirk Barbera**

The cork from the champagne bottle glanced off the very pretty cheek of Sarah Wycherley. Shocked and dismayed at the occurrence, the four friends surrounding the man with the bottle jumped to the young woman in order to assess the damage. Sarah's face became as red as a cherry as she waved them away with a mirthful laugh.

"Now boys this is the greatest celebration of our friendship. We may never have one like this again. Life is too unknown." She said as she picked up the cork and tucked it into her purse. "Don't go spoiling it with worrying over a tiny cork. Let us drink to our dear friend

Jeff Heidegger. May the company you founded last 1,000 years.”

“Long may he reign!” Said Jerry, the man beside Sarah. He wore a tailored white suit with a black tie that stopped short of his navel. His blonde hair draped in thick strands across his head, with a single bang breaking rank to sway across his forehead. “This all brings to mind a tale that my grandmother used to tell me as a boy. There was a young king whose domain was farther than the rays of the sun could touch. His people were proud and happy and rich under his rule. He subdued all his enemies and there was peace in his kingdom. His queen was the most beautiful queen in all the kingdoms under the sun. She was faithful and loving and good with her hands.” They all laughed. “Their desire was to have an heir. But their union brought only a single daughter, beautiful though she be. Their riches were provided by a powerful... majestic. Magical... Donkey! This donkey shit gold. He was the magical ass that put the golden goose to shame. Joy can’t last forever as we know. Happiness is fleeting. We must enjoy it as we find it. The gods said this king had too much pleasure, joy, and happiness. He was due for some misery. His queen grew sick. On her death bed she made him promise only to marry a woman as beautiful and fine as she. The King of course agreed. Six months later, he is told by his advisors that he must marry another and produce a legitimate heir. But how can he overcome this vow? A king must always keep his word. Well, there was only one woman who was as beautiful as the Queen had been... Yes you probably can guess it... The wily daughter asks for her father to perform several deeds which she believes to be impossible, before she will agree to marry him; to her dismay, he succeeds in them all. Eventually, she asks him to skin Donkey Ned—for that’s the donkey’s name—she believes he would never destroy the source of his wealth. But, indeed, he has gone mad with lust and passion for the one woman allowed to him. So he skins the beast and gives it as a dress to his daughter. In terror, she takes the donkey-skin and flees his domain. Her rich attire becomes rags the further she gets from the luxurious castle, her hair is filled with bramble, her legs and arms and face are speckled with dirt. Everyone in this new kingdom call her Donkey-Skin and ridicule her as the ugliest woman in all the kingdoms. There she lives until a prince notices her bathing in the lake, and gets his sword all rattled. She is made his cook, where she lets slip her gold ring into one of his pies. The prince tells

the kingdom that whoever fits the ring will be his wife. All the ladies of the land attempt to fit their fat or skinny finger in ring, but to no avail. Finally, Donkey-skin is asked to try and it fits. For the wedding, all the kings from every land come, including her father. His madness now subsided, he happily agrees to the marriage and she lives happily ever after.”

“My god man what made you say it?” Jake, who stood next to Jerry in the circle of friends said with a smirk.

“It’s a warning. None of us skin Donkey Ned here!”

Beside Jake was Stephen, who lifted his glass of champagne. The gold liquid reflected the chandelier above and rivaled it in effervescence. Stephen waited for everyone’s rapt attention before speaking.

“Well thank you for that lesson good Jerry. Maybe you should switch professions! But if I may, I have a thing to say to our merry band. Only the luckiest of mankind may be part of a band of brothers... and Sisters,” he nodded in Sarah’s direction, just at the moment another woman wearing a flowing red dress with the longest train one has not seen in these many years arrived. Sylvia Rose caressed the naked elbow of Sarah and smiled at the young orator. He continued, “but once in a lifetime. Our lives like the circle we currently inhabit are forever and intimately forged. Soon the work of young Dr. Heidegger will revolutionize the minds and bodies of all the world. We friends play but a small role—and mine, your most humble political representative is the smallest of all!” He said with a bow that could construed as ironic. “Yes I’m the lowliest and luckiest of you all. Jerry you Titan of industry, where would we all be without your business connections? You have helped surround our good doctor with the people best suited to launch this company into the stratosphere. Sarah...”

“Oh shut it! I can’t handle two windbags at one toast. At least Stev-o here had some lustful things to say.” Jake who wore a simple black tuxedo, and put all the men to shame with the cut his form took in it. His wide shoulders tapered to a thin waist and powerful legs. His voice was quiet and he smiled. “We’d be here all night listening to that golden voice.” Stephen smiled and nodded his head. “But I s’pose we needn’t forget the real reason we’re here. Public offerings are all fine and yeah, thanks pal, You’re about to make me richer than I ever thought possible. At least without sleeping with some heiress” He looked around at the friends who all chuckled. “Well we know it’s true. I never would’ve thought that the piss-ant next to me in boot, a guy who could barely make the first march out of the camp, that guy would have the strongest will of every one of us. I thought you’d die of exhaustion but you pushed through. I thought you’d give up on every one of your little experiments but ya pushed through. And I never thought you’d win the heart of the most beautiful woman from the most prestigious name in these here lands! That was my job brotha!” As he said this, he walked over to the two women. He goes to grab Sylvia’s hand, which held a diamond ring large enough to sink a freight-liner. Jake brought her hand to his lips and kissed it.

“All right!” Jeff said. He was not as tall as Jake or as eloquent as Stephen or as sly as Jerry, but he walked with the air of a king. His bride-to-be ran into his arms in mock terror.

“Oh save me from the fiend,” Sylvia sighed into his ear. Her head rested upon his chest.

They all burst out laughing.

“Jake aren’t you supposed to be my best man? That’s the only wife you can’t seduce.”

“Careful now my friend. You know I like a challenge.” He said while winking. “But yes, yes.” He raised his glass “good health. Much love. And, my dear Sylvia, keep this golden ass shitting gold!”

Jeff placed his hands protectively over the arms of his betrothed and brought her in close. Though he spoke to her alone, each friend in turn felt as though he was meant to hear it.

“They mean no harm in their delusions. And I may be the ass they want me to be. But I’m your ass now and forever.”

Sylvia reached around his waist and rested her arms on his hip muscles. “My eyes see only you. My donkey. Give me the promise from Jerry's story.” Jeff straightened his back and looked prepared to kneel. “Should we be forced to part, for any time, you will never replace me—at least not with someone less than me.”

“You’ve ruined all women for me.”

Sarah reached up and kissed his mouth. It was a long and intimate kiss but meant to be seen.

“Now let me do my duty and entertain these guests and trick these good friends of yours into forgetting about their ambitions to own my golden ass.”

“They’re mostly your friends dear.” said Jeff.

“Up here in the the mezzanine are all the friends that matter. Down below are those few influencers within your most immediate sphere that we must tend



too.”

Sylvia moved like molten lava, flowing between the people around her. As she passed Sarah, she grabbed the woman’s hand and led her to a couch beneath a man-sized mirror. The other guests stared longingly at the couch. They dared not approach without invitation.

“It’s you, you know.” Sylvia whispered while touching Sarah’s necklace, her fingertips caressing the skin of her collar bone.

Sarah froze. A sickening feeling welled up in the pit of her stomach and she smiled. It was an awkward smile half cocked and with no creases around the eyes.

Knowingly, she said “me?”

“Yes my love. You. Should Jeff have desires that take him from me for a time, it will be with you. He has always wanted you. I can tell. We are young. Life is long. A man of his powers will inevitably fall into the well of his sensual needs. I can keep up for quite a while... but.”

“You don’t know Jeff then.”

“I know a part of him still wants you... I just

can't figure out why the two of you never..."

"I broke his code."

Sylvia's eyes raked over Sarah's body in the way a surveyor evaluated a piece of land.

"Jake." Sylvia said.

Sarah did not respond. "Whatever you do, never betray him. He won't hate you if you betray him. He'll pity you. It's worse."

"No no never betray. Persuade. Everyone has pleasures that must be satisfied. Whoever desires a thing but acts not, breeds pestilence."

Sarah started to stand and Sylvia placed her hand on the young woman's upper thigh. Sarah's chiffon dress was tied with a simple white belt around her thin waist.

Sylvia moved her head back and forth and said "I only meant that we will both want to experience different sensations one day."

"You don't know Jeff."

"Oh love. Don't be so sure."

"I know that you want him. I know you put on a face for him. But you have been denied entrance to the only room in this house you want."

The two were sitting with knees touching, staring into one another's eyes. Each a mirror of the other. Shoulders straight, hair draped over their backs. They were two felines about to pounce, with but a single jarring move from the other; watching them no one would be able to say whether their pouncing would lead to claws in eyes or tongues on tongues.

Sylvia gracefully put her hand over Sarah's. "He is ours. You were here first. To keep him happy we must all work together. We must all act as one, for Jeff's interest."

Sarah squinted. There was a strong current running through her body. She desperately sought to control it. Her breath was heavier and her skin tingled. "I'll never hurt Jeff."

"Again." Sylvia added, without pity. After a moment she added, "And you shouldn't. Oh! My love listen, I want all the pleasure Jeff can handle. He wants you and you want him. It's only natural. You've been friends for years and but for that one... indiscretion, you'd be in my place tonight."

"Is this talk for... tonight?"

"What better time for us to become friends? I know we will be much more soon."

"Jeff would never."

"Oh love. The way he watches you. Even with me in his arms. He loves me and would never betray me—but together you and I..."

"What is it you want from me?"

“Just an understanding. We bring Jeff pleasure and happiness and to each other: The same.”

Sarah’s hand clenched a moment. She was prepared to punch Sylvia and crush her bones. The light from the party shrank to the size of a keyhole. The only image that was revealed were the red lips of Sylvia Rose. Her lips were thick. Her teeth white and low in her mouth. There was so much room she thought. The sensuality of the bride’s mouth maddened Sarah. An image flashed in her mind as Sylvia tossed her head back, showing the tight muscles of her throat, and began to laugh. Suddenly, Sarah felt her hand was between Sylvia’s breast, held there by the bride herself.

“Promise me, love! We will bring each other only pleasure! Let us not bicker and rival.”

Like an electric current exploding a circuit breaker, a surge of blood crashed through Sarah’s body. The thought of intimacy with the one man forbidden to her was too much.

Holding Sylvia’s gaze, she said “to a future of pleasure.”

When they hugged skin from their shoulders, arms and bosom smashed together for several long moments, the only pact they would ever need.

As they stood, still holding hands, Sylvia moved her lips near Sarah’s ear and said “Now, how do I get that politician alone?”

“Go under the Yew tree. I’ll send him.”

The two women parted. Their re-entrance into the society of the party sent a ripple of movement from one end of the ballroom to the other, like The Wave at a sports stadium. Sarah's black silk dress brushed against the bodies of men and women as she wound her way to where Jerry stood, talking to a group of constituents.

"The daughter was the only one in all the city beautiful enough to match..."

Sarah's fingers, lightly dug into the fat of his tricep. "The Yew. She's waiting."

"What?" He said, miffed at her interrupting his story.

"The big tree outside. Go there."

Ears perked, he grabbed her hand and said to the group "gentleman, a lady calls and I dare not turn her away! You know what they say about scorning women." He winks. Some men in the crowd howled.

Leaning over confidently "She wants me?"

"Who else can hold at bay the vermin who will move in on our good doctor. You're our shield."

Jerry scratched at his elbow. His hand went into his pocket and he crossed his feet as he stood. "But. Tonight? Here? Seems we should wait to have our conversation on another night."

"What better time for you to become friends with Jeff's bride then on this night?"

Jerry's body had been bent like a tree limb with snow weighing it down, and then the tension releasing he shot up straight. He nodded.

Though people tried to stop him on his way out of the mansion, he strove with determination to the hallway. As he passed a Grandfather clock that had carvings of cupid and psyche with butterfly wings, chasing one and then the other, he was struck by a terror he could not grasp. A tear rolled down his cheek and his knees buckled. He held the clock for support, then looked back down the hallway to the sounds of the party. A flickering light caught his attention in the library ahead, then it flickered out. In a hurry, he ran to the oak doors, leading out to the garden.

Jerry was not a man to care for the flowers or bees. He was interested in one destiny and all his thoughts and actions moved in that direction. The green vines draped around the porch, making the outside of the mansion appear transported into a fairy tale. The steps down were a nuisance in his way rather than perfectly crafted stone, built not in the hurried fashion of manufactured homes, but in the careful way of the man building a cathedral. He moved swiftly past the fountain with three tiers of water. The bottom tier had a bird bathing in it. A statue of verltumnus was emerging from the top. He walked by the hand-cut roses and the trimmed hedges. He saw only the yew tree looming on the far side of the property, hidden from the eyes of the party.

A small string of light shone through the leaves. Its source was the balcony above. The moon provided a lantern by which to conduct their affairs. Standing frozen in the light breeze was a form meant for the moonlight and its activities

"Dear old Jerry. Is it you at last?" Sylvia's voice was a leaf on the wind; it carried to his head and quickly fell to the ground.

"It's good to know we can talk what is best for our future ventures. I..."

"Oh Let's not dance to that tune. We understand one another. My future husband will do many things but does not know men like you."

"Me? Miss Rose I..."

"Oh hush. You know what I mean. The world can be ours if we know how to bend the world to our needs. Jeff will never do it. He'll tinker and build and bring to the world gadgets and inventions to control their little minds but you Jerry you have the real power, and without you none of this will be able to continue. We'll need you to stop the flood that's coming."

"We have underestimated you. I suppose that it was inevitable. You do come from the world he is entering..." Jerry moved a step closer and paused, his hand in mid air toward her waist.

"There's a bill that will harm his company. It's coming soon and you know it. How can we stop it?"

Jerry's eyes widened and he let out a burst of laughter. "There's only one way you could



have gained that information. That man would never have said anything, even under torture." Jerry felt a surge of confidence, and put his hand over her cheek and his thumb wiped across her lips.

She did not move.

"Jerry don't be a fool. You and I are compatriots in war. We have to fight this bill together. We have to win over the hearts of those who wish to wipe us out. He has no idea how many people hate him."

"Not us."

They stared at one another. "No not us. We are his defenders. That's all." She brushed her hair back.

"I will get you the man you need. Today, someday favors of this kind will not be enough for me."

"My dear, who ever means forever anymore? Go bring that man with his hands in everyone else's purse strings," Sylvia said and she leaned against a big root of the yew.

Jerry hummed as he walked toward the mansion once again. The taste of his future victory on the tip of his tongue.

When he arrived beside Sarah, he said "Now that woman is going to be the best or worst for us. We can't be controlling that one."

"She's not what I expected."

"She wants Stephen now."

"Better go get him. I'll go to Jeff" Sarah said.

As two conspirators, whispering into hidden microphones, they parted, making their way to their marks.

"Jeffrey. Your guests could not be happier for you. Talk with them. They love you."

"Where's Sylvia?"

"Oh she's talking to this or that guest. She likes her privacy. You've got a power-house of a partner in her Jeff. I commend your selection."

Taking his eyes from scanning the room below for his bride, he shifts his gaze to Sarah.

Her hand went to her throat. Jeff always made one feel as though utterly exposed. His dark eyes were kind but focused so intently that he could see every pore every line every possibility in you, and he was unhappy only if the object of his scrutiny did not live up to his standards for its possibility.

"We could have been good, too." Sarah said.

"Yes. We could have."

"I am happy for you, Jeff, I am. Our time together can still... happen... Someday."

"You know that won't happen."

"Life is long and unexpected."

He leaned against the railing, his back to the guests beneath. "Yes it is. And I will be with Sylvia through all of it."

"You heard her. If anything should separate you..."

"Damn you! On this night?"

Sarah rubbed her hands together, then grabbed his hand before he could leave. "Please Jeff. I meant nothing by it. We'll always be friends, no matter what, right?" Even if I, overstep."

"To me do anything. Not a word against her."

"Yes." Sarah's finally understood something about Jeff. Sylvia knew it. The revelation caught in her mouth. She wanted to spit it at him.

"Let's go somewhere private." She said, pulling Jeff. He stiffened like a steel rod. "As friends, silly. Let us talk of your love. I wish to know more about her. She's a fascinating little witch!" Sarah said and laughed.

"Bewitched me." Jeff replied and let his friend guide him, just as Jerry was leaving Jeff's domain and entering into the domain of another.

As he moved toward the grandfather clock, it clicked loudly and he could see the figure of cupid pull back its arrow. "How fine," Jerry said to himself. "I wonder

how much that fool spent on this?"

He did not know how it was possible, but the clock chimed loudly as if hitting the hour of midnight. The sound was that of a gong. He wiped his eyes, and looked again. There were still a few hours till midnight. "Must be broken," he said to himself.

With the sound of the last chime, Jerry heard the distinct sound of lovers play wrestling in the library. He tiptoed over to the light flicking and, like a young child spying on his sister and her lover; he stuck one half of his head into the room. He was all blonde hair, forehead, and eyeballs stretched to see the scene.

The room was pitch black.

What source of illumination had led him down that darkened hall? He thought and shivered as if cold.

He stretched to his full height, stomped a foot and walked out of the mansion. Every footstep brought the feeling that he was being followed. The breeze tickled his hair and a bug buzzed so close to his ear he could have sworn it had nested inside his skull. He quickened his pace until he bumped into Sylvia Rose.

The fragrance of spring aroused him out of his fear. She had grabbed hold of him for balance and kept her hand gripped around the back of his neck. She stayed that way for a moment, taking the measure of the man.

Jerry moved back and rubbed the back of his neck, where he hand had been. Then he stuffed his hands into his pockets.

In the way of old intimates, she removed a leaf that had fallen in his hair.

"I can tell we are already friends." She said it simply, like the guard to the prisoner.

He shook his head in wonderment. For the first time in his life, he knew that any manipulation or trick or con he would try would be bested by her. Sylvia could only be privy to his endeavors, not left out of them.

"Great friends."

"You my dear friend are the power we must have to save our good Doctor... Ned. Without all your connections, we will not be able to reign in that magical beast. And you see his magic. I heard you."

His thumb rubbed across his eyebrow, straightening the loose hairs. "Yes. He—"

"There's trouble on the company board already. Some want to stifle his experiments and focus on maximizing profits of his current creations."

"How do you know that?"

Ignoring the question, "he must be allowed his experiments."

"But my dear, you may somehow have information that has not left the circle of my closest connections, but you don't understand business. If we sink all our profits into more of his experiments right now, we may lose all that we have won. Why did you know only one of his last fifteen experiments led to anything?"

And that one thing paid for all this," She swept her arm to the mansion and

included Jerry.

“Why yes,” He scratched his chin, “We are not gamblers. How often can he pull that off?”

“It’s not a gamble. If you don’t let Jeff experiment, you’ll lose your donkey. His nourishment is his experiments.”

“Hmm. I could get them to give him some funding for his laboratory. He has been going on about a serum that would wipe out most of the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industry. Imagine that! I thought it was a bit lofty even for him. Waiting seemed the prudent thing to do.”

Sylvia said nothing. She looked intently into his eyes, and nodded. Jerry’s arms were crossed and so were hers. She swayed with the cool night breeze, not minding the dropping temperature, despite not wearing anything but her thin dress.

Jerry could not help but glance down the cleavage heaving before him. Sylvia obliged by pretending not to notice. She took a step nearer him.

“We’ll be great and intimate friends, Jer. As will all of us good friends. There are so many pleasures to experience in our future, but we must protect our real investment.

“Yes. I see that. Well, you’ve got your magic and I mine. Let me go work it before these fellows solidify the ideas I’ve planted in them.”

At the moment, Jerry was winding his way back to the party, Sarah placed her hand on Jeff’s.

"Oh do you remember when Jake started flirting with the wife of that giant of a man? You two were still in uniform but that guy was not going to back down. I've never seen such courage. You're the best friend of all of us." Sarah said, while caressing his arm. In a fluid motion, Jeff took hold of her hand and patted it gently.

Sarah continued, "And then you found her."

"Well. She found me."

"Is that right?"

"Come now. You've known her long enough to sense that she is not one to wait by for some fool of a man to buck up the courage to speak with her. She had me from the moment we locked eyes. I was giving a talk on aging. She was attentive, something unusual for someone young and beautiful. Most women I had been meeting were bobble heads, nodding at every idea I had and hoping for a taste of my wallet. Not Sylvia. No. Do you know what she did? This heiress to a fortune? She waited like some fan girl in the parking lot. She made me stop. Even in a crowd she was instantly visible. We talked of youth and aging. Then..." He paused to stop from becoming choked up. "Then she recited a poem. I couldn't believe it. I had resigned myself to the fate of many of my predecessors. Not aloneness so much. There are women enough to fill ones nights. But loneliness. I never knew someone could be beautiful and interesting."

Sarah felt light-headed. She wanted to scream at him but rubbed her arms as though all the warmth had fled from her body.

"The poem? Do you remember?"



His eyes glinted and he stared right through Sarah Wycherley.”

What is it to grow old?

Is it to lose the glory of the form,  
The luster of the eye?

Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?

—Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—

Not our bloom only, but our  
strength—decay?

Is it to feel each limb

Grow stiffer, every function less exact,  
Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more; but not

Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dreamed  
'twould be!

'Tis not to have our life

Mellowed and softened as with sunset  
glow,

A golden day's decline.

'Tis not to see the world

As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,  
And heart profoundly stirred;

And weep, and feel the fullness of the past,  
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days

And not once feel that we were ever  
young;  
It is to add, immured  
In the hot prison of the present, month  
To month with weary pain.  
It is to suffer this,  
And feel but half, and feebly, what we  
feel.  
Deep in our hidden heart  
Festers the dull remembrance of a  
change,  
But no emotion—none.  
It is—last stage of all—  
When we are frozen up within, and  
quite  
The phantom of ourselves,  
To hear the world applaud the hollow  
ghost  
Which blamed the living man.

Jeff's eyes were glazed and unfocused  
as if he were dreaming of a far away  
land. Then he focused on Sarah, her  
lips were parted in a perfect circle. He  
was angry with himself at the thought  
in his mind. He chased it away with  
the movement of his hand wiping  
down the front of his face. Before he  
could finish his movement, Sarah put  
her hand under his hand and over his  
mouth.

She was inches from him. He could  
feel the heat from her body rising like  
a volcano. She had no control over her  
body as she moved her hand down his  
chest and over his arm. She sensed  
the moment was as fragile as juggling  
faberge eggs. Her other hand touched  
the firm handle of the door. She  
pushed down lightly, avoiding the  
“click,” from the door, when, the loud  
sound of the clock chimed the new  
hour.

Jeff grabbed her by the shoulders and tenderly brought her body to his chest. He kissed her forehead. Then he opened the door to his bedroom and led her to the balcony. On the way he grabbed one of the bottles of chilled champagne he had saved for later and popped the cork. They watched it arc over the balcony like a cannon being fired at an enemy. His fingers pinched the spurting fountain of white frothing liquid that burst from the tip of the bottle. He poured two glasses and they walked to the ledge of the stone balcony. They could almost jump from the balcony to the top branches of the Yew tree. Perhaps Jake could have made the leap, Jeff thought.

The branches trembled and the two observers believed it was the nightingale preparing to give them a song. A moment later the sound like a grunting boar reached their ears.

"What is that?" Jeff asked.

"This is a party. Someone must be enjoying..."

"SHH."

Someone, a woman, was breathing heavily, and panted a "NO!" that meant two radically different things to the two observers on the balcony. Jeff was on the alert. He peered through the dense leaves and finally saw two bodies, one holding down the other while gyrating above. He almost jumped off the balcony but he certainly would die from such a fall. He bolted down the stairs shoving people aside who looked on in extreme interest and took no offense. Sarah stayed. She watched and saw the woman's mouth reach desperately for the man's. Their action needed no rescuing. Sarah laughed so hard she dropped the glass on the floor. She could not tear her eyes from the two bodies. There was

not a shred of pity in Sarah. She watched as the crimson dress was thrown aside and Jake made his way inside. His strong back was being scratched so hard blood streaked. He held her arms above her head with a powerful movement, the triceps and forearms bulging as she feigned resistance. With his other hand he pushed her legs to her chest and went so deep she squealed in pain. Then she forced her legs back and began resisting, arching her back and pushing forward with her feet on his chest. Jake just pushed down harder as his hips fluidly rocked back and forth.

As if calculated to some perfect heinous timing, at the very moment Jeff Arrived, Sylvia put on a visage of terror. With all his might Jeff pulled Jake off his bride and kicked his face. Jake rolled to the side, his prick beginning to soften, but still dripped. Jeff did not notice the signs of acquiescence. He saw only his battered bride and the lustful Jake. Sylvia writhed in pain and shame, not caring even to cover herself.

"I'll destroy you for this." Jeff said as he helped Sylvia put on her clothes. He was helping her into the mansion when Jake grabbed Jeff's shoulder and whipped him around. Whirling around, Jeff's fist connected with Jake's face.

Jake rolled back, gathered his composure and leaped on Jeff. His long strong arm wrapped around the man's throat like a boa. "Listen... " he said "It's not what you..."

And Jeff's head snapped back, crushing Jake's nose and interrupting his sentence.

"Sylvia run up stairs to Sarah." Jeff said. Then turning to Jake, "I saw it all. You'll go to prison for this. If I don't kill you now."

Sylvia was already in the house crying foul.

Jake went to chase after her, and Jeff grabbed him and whipped him to the ground. Jake was ready for it and turned to the side, resisting Jeff's maneuver. They faced each other. Jeff went in to throw a fist at Jake's head, but Jake's hands were up near his chest—He sprang forward, grabbing at shoulders. The punch was ineffectual. Then Jake's body went low, wrapping both arms around, one leg, he twisted his whole body and brought Jake to the ground. Jeff's arms went to grab Jake's wrist, but he twisted his body and bent his elbow, causing Jeff to lose his grip. In a flash, Jake's legs were around Jeff's waist and his arms around his neck. Jeff was choking and trying to pry his fingers underneath the arm which gripped his neck, but he was failing.

"I'll choke you out Jeff. Just stop this. It's not what you think."

Jeff gave up trying to break his hold and in his last remaining moments of consciousness sought to gouge his opponents eyes. The blackness overtook him and Jake let go immediately. Before his old friend could wake up, he ran toward the house pulling on his shirt as he went.

Jeff's eyes opened to the sound of a bird singing; it was perched on a branch of the yew, ignorant of all around it, The sound pierced his skull. He saw Sarah on the balcony moving inside toward the room's entrance. He stood up and ran.

In the mansion he pushed past everyone including Jerry and Stephen, who chased after him. The music increased in volume to cover the interruption. No matter, for everyone was staring at the trio charging up the grand staircase.

Jake ripped the door open, behind him were Jerry and Stephen and in front was Jake leaning over Sarah who was lying on the bed.

“Still you want to rape her!”

“Rape? God damn you.” He spoke aloud and Jeff believed the curse was directed at him, but the four friends looked at the crimson gash lying on the white bed. Slowly, as Jeff moved toward his old friend, Sylvia rose to a sitting position.

“Stay down!” Someone yelled.

But something had taken hold in Sylvia. She stood to her feet, a banshee with wild hair and blood streaking down her leg.

“You bastard.” And she leaped on Jake. He stumbled back until he bumped into Sarah hard. All three tumbled backward toward the balcony. Sarah tried to move but was pushed back by Jake’s arm. She flew down toward the floor. Her cheek struck the sharp edge of the stone night table and her face hit the floor hard. Her eyes closed, blood oozing from her mouth and face.

In a blind fury, Jeff was all limbs punching at Jake, most hitting arm, shoulders and hand. He pushed Jake back toward the balcony. Sylvia ran to Jeff to stop him, and as he cocked another fist, she slipped on the liquid from the champagne and tumbled back over the ledge. Both Jake and Jeff reached out to her. The nightingale’s chirps grew louder in the crescendo that matched the high pitched, startled screech of Sylvia on her way down. The climax of her body thudding to the ground beneath brought a silence over the unnatural night. The bird ceased. The music too. Even the breathing from the friends on the balcony had ceased.

Sarah’s eyes groggily opened. Her body curled into a ball and tears streamed down her cheek, mingling with the long red gash that revealed teeth underneath. So she would not choke, she spit out a tooth like an old boxer. The

pain hit a peak and then it subsided down into her subconscious.

She sat up, her hand covering the gash with a towel. Blood began soaking through it. First, she saw Jerry's face. His shoulders were crunched inward. Both eyebrows pinched toward each other. His lip quivered. She saw Stephen beside him. He pinched his nose and then closed his eyes. Looking to the balcony, she saw Jake and Jeff, shoulders touching, four knees on the ground staring in disbelief over the ledge. Jeff's body fell to the ground, his knees curled to his chest. No one could look at him.

It seemed as though a single breeze blew by and the sound of sirens blared up from the hill.

Stephen said quietly. "It was an accident! No one's to blame. No one!"

Jeff stopped crying. He ran to Stephen. "You! You too! All of you. There's no escaping this. She was innocent."

They each shared a look as Jeff ran down to his bride. Through the pain, Sarah shook her head.

"It's over." Jake spoke with finality.

Under the Yew Tree, Jeff screamed over a body red as her dress.

The clock chimed and the three good old friends, shivered.



## Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
    Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
    A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
    Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
    In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
    What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."



**fin**

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