

The Dreaming Death¹

By Aleister Crowley

“Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me.”—SWINBURNE, *Sapphics*.

My beauty in thy deep pure love
Anchors its homage far above
All lights of heaven. The stars awake,
The very stars bend down to take
From its fresh fragrance for the sake
Of their own cloud-compelling peace.
On earth there lies a silver fleece
Of new-fallen snow, secure from sun
In alleys, leafy every one
This year already with the spring.
The breeze blows freshly, thrushes sing,
And all the woods are burgeoning
With quick new buds; across the snow
The scent of violets to and fro
Wafts at the hour of dawn. Alone
I wait, a figure turned to stone
(Or salt for pain). A week ago
Thine arms had held me, now I know
Far off they clasp the empty air:
Thy lips seek home, and in despair
Lament aloud over the frosted moor.
Sad am I, sad, albeit sure
There is no change of God above
And no abatement of our love.
For still though thou be gone, I see
In the glad mirror secretly
That I am beautiful in thee,
Thy love irradiates my eyes,
Tints my skin gold, and melodies
Of music run over my face;
Smiles envy kisses in the race
To bathe beneath my eyelids. Light
Clothes rae and circles with the might
Of warmer rosier suns. Thy kiss
Dwells on my bosom, and it is

¹ NOTE.—The scene of this poem is a little spinney near the wooden bridge in Love Lane, Cambridge.

A glittering mount of fire, that burns
Incense unnamed to heaven, and yearns
In smoke toward thy home. Desire
Bellies the sails of molten fire
Upon the ship of Youth with wind
Urgently panting out behind,
Impatient till the strand appear
And the blue sea have ceased to rear
Fountains of foam against the prow.
Hail! I can vision even now
That golden shore. A lake of light
Burns to the sky; above, the night
Hovers, her wings grown luminous.
(I think she dearly loveth us.)
The sand along the glittering shore
Is all of diamond; rivers pour
Unceasing floods of light along,
Whose virtue is so bitter strong
That he who bathes within them straight
Rises an angel to the gate
Of heaven and enters as a king.
Birds people it on varied wing
Of rainbow, fishes gold and fine
Dart like bright stars through fount and brine,
And all the sea about our wake
Foams with the silver water-snake.
There is a palace veiled in mist,
A single magic amethyst
Built it; the incense burns alway;
So the light steam upon it lay.
There thou art dwelling. I am ware
The music of thine eyes and hair
Calls to the wind to chase our ship
Faster toward; the waters slip
Smoothly and swift beneath the keel.
The pulses of the vessel feel
I draw toward thee; now the sails
Hang idly, for the golden gales
Drop as the vessel grates the sand.
Come, thou true love, and hold my hand.
I tremble (for my love) to land.
I feel thy arms around me steal;
Thy breath upon my cheeks I feel;
Thy lips draw out to mine: the breath
Of ocean grows as still as death,
The breezes swoon for very bliss.

The sacrament of true love's kiss
Accomplishes: I feel a pain
Stab my heart through and sleep again,
And I am in thine arms for ever.

* * *

There came a tutor, who had never
Known the response of love to love;
He wandered through the woods above
The river, and came suddenly
Where he lay sleeping. Purity
And joy beyond the speech of man
Dwelt on his face, divinely wan.
“How beautiful is sleep!” he saith.
Bends over him. There is no breath,
No sound, no motion: it is death.
And gazing on the happy head
“How beautiful is Death!” he said.