

The Flight

By Aleister Crowley

Lift up thine eyes! for night is shed around,
As light profound,
And visible as snow on steeped hills,
Where silence fills
The shaded hollows: night, a royal queen
Most dimly seen
Through silken curtains that bedeck the bed.
Lift up thine head!
For night is here, a dragon, to devour
The slow sweet hour
Filled with all smoke of incense, and the praise
More loud than day's
That swings its barren censer in the sky,
And asks to die
Because the sea will hear no hollow moan
Beyond its own,
Because the sea that kissed dead Sappho sings
Of strange dark things—
Shapes of bright breasts that purple as the sun
Grows dark and dun,
Of pallid lips more haggard for the kiss
Of Salmacis,
Of eager eyes that startle for the fear
Too dimly dear
Lest there come death, like passion, and fulfil
Their dreams of ill!
Oh! lift thy forehead to the night's cool wind!
The meekest hind
That fears the noonday in her grove is bold
To seek the gold
So pale and perfect as the moon puts on:
The light is gone.
Hardly as yet one sees the crescent maid
Move, half afraid,
Into the swarthy forest of the air
And, breast made bare,
Gather her limbs about her for the chase
Through starry space,
And, while the lilies sway their heads, to bend
Her bow, to send

A swift white arrow at some recreant star.
The sea is far
Dropped in the hollows of the swooning land.
Oh! hold my hand!
Lift up thy deep eyes to my face, and let
Our lips forget
The dumb dead hours before they met together!
The snowbright weather
Calls us beyond the grassy downs, to be
Beside the sea,
The slowly-breathing ocean of the south.
Oh, make thy mouth
A rosy flame like that most perfect star
Whose kisses are
So red and ripe! Oh, let thy limbs entwine
Like love with mine!
Oh, bend thy gracious body to my breast
To sleep, to rest!
But chiefly let thine eyes be set on me,
As when the sea
Lay like a mirror to reflect the shape
Of yonder cape
Where Sappho stood and touched the lips of death!
Thy subtle breath
Shall flow like incense in between our cheeks,
Where pleasure seeks
In vain a wiser happiness. And so
Our whispers low
Shall dim the utmost beauty of thy gaze
Through moveless days
And long nights equable with tranced pleasure:
So love at leisure
Shall make his model of our clinging looks,
And burn his books
To write a new sweet volume deeper much,
And frail to touch,
Being the mirror of a gossamer
Too soft and fair.
This is the hour when all the world is sleeping;
The winds are keeping
A lulling music on the frosty sea.
The air is free,
As free as summer-time, to sound or cease:
God's utmost peace
Lies like a cloud upon the quiet land.
O little hand!

White hand with rose leaves shed about the tips,
As if my lips
Had left their bloom upon it when they kissed,
As if a mist
Of God's delicious dawn had overspread
Their face, and fled!
O wonderful fresh blossom of the wood!
O purpling blood!
O azure veins as clear as all the skies!
O longing eyes
That look upon me fondly to beget
Two faces, set
Either like flowers upon their laughing blue,
Where morning dew
Sparkles with all the passion of the dawn!
The happy lawn
Leads, by the stillest avenues, to groves
Made soft by loves;
And all the nymphs have made a mossy dell
Hard by the well
Where even a Satyr might behold the grace
Of such a face
As his who perished for his own delights,
So well requites
That witching fountain his desire that looks.
Two slow bright brooks
Encircle it with silver, and the moon
Strikes into tune
The ripples as they break. For here it was
Their steps did pass,
Dreamy Endymion's and Artemis',
Who bent to kiss
Across the moss-grown rocks that build the well:
And here they tell
Of one beneath the hoary stone who hid
And watched unbid
When one most holy came across the glade,
Who saw a maid
So bright that mists were dim upon his eyes,
And yet he spies
So sweet a vision that his gentle breath
Sighed into death:
And others say that here the fairies bring
The fairy king,
And crown him with a flower of eglantine,
And of the vine

Twist him a throne made perfect with wild roses,
And gathered posies
From all the streams that wander through the vale,
And crying, "Hail!
"All hail, most beautiful of all our race!"
Cover his face
With blossoms gathered from a fairy tree
Like foam from sea,
So delicate that mortal eyes behold
Ephemeral gold
Flash, and not see a flower, but say the moon
Has shone too soon
Anxious to great Endymion; and this
Most dainty kiss
They cover him withal, and Dian sees
Through all the trees
No pink pale blossom of his tender lips.
The little ships
Of silver leaf and briar-bloom sail here,
No storm to fear
Though butterflies be all their mariners.
The whitethroat stirs
The beech-leaves to awake the tiny breeze
That soothes the seas,
And yet gives breath to shake their fairy sails;
Young nightingales,
Far through the golden plumage of the night,
With strong delight
Purple the evening with amazing song;
The moonbeams throng
In shining clusters to the fairy throat,
Whose clear trills float
And dive and run about the crystal deep
As sweet as sleep.
Only, fair love of this full heart of mine,
There lacks the wine
Our kisses might pour out for them, they wait,
And we are late;
Only, my flower of all the world, the thrush
(You hear him? Hush!)
Lingers, and sings not to his fullest yet:
Our love shall get
Such woodland welcome as none ever had
To make it glad.
Come, it is time, cling closer to my hand.
We understand.

We must go forth together, not to part.
O perfect heart!
O little heart that beats to mine, away
Before the day
Ring out the tocsin for our flight! My ship
Is keen to dip
Her plunging forehead in the silvering sea.
To-morrow we
Shall be so far away, and then to-morrow
Shall shake off sorrow,
And be to-morrow and not change for ever:
No dawn shall sever
The sleepy eyelids of the night, no eve
Shall fall and cleave
The blue deep eyes of day. Your hand, my queen!
Look down and lean
Your whole weight on me, then leap out, as light
As swallow's flight,
And race across the shadows of the moon,
And keep the tune
With ringing hoofs across the fiery way.
Your eyes betray
How eager is your heart, and yet—O dare
To fashion fair
A whole long life of love. Leap high, laugh low
I love you—so!—
One kiss—and then to freedom! See the bay
So far away,
But not too far for love! Ring out, sharp hoof,
And put to proof
The skill of him that steeled thee! Freedom! Set
As never yet
Thy straining sides for freedom! Gallant mare!
The frosty air
Kindles the blood within us as we race.
O love! Thy face
Flames with the passion of our happy speed!
The noble steed
Pashes the first gold limit of the sand.
Ah love, thy hand!
We win, no foot pursuing spans the brow!
Yes, kiss me now!