

The King-Ghost

By Aleister Crowley

The King-Ghost is abroad. His spectre legions
Sweep from their icy lakes and bleak ravines
Unto these weary and untrodden regions
Where man lies penned among his Might-have-beens.
Keep us in safety, Lord,
What time the King-Ghost is abroad!

The King-Ghost from his grey malefic slumbers
Awakes the malice of his bloodless brain.
He marshals the innumerable numbers
Of shrieking shapes on the sepulchral plain.
Keep us, for Jesu's sake,
What time the King-Ghost is awake!

The King-Ghost wears a crown of hopes forgotten
Dead loves are woven in his ghastly robe;
Bewildered wills and faiths grown old and rotten
And deeds undared his sceptre, sword, and globe.
Keep us, O Mary maid,
What time the King-Ghost goes arrayed!

The Hell-Wind whistles through his plumeless pinions;
Clanks all that melancholy host of bones;
Fate's principalities and Death's dominions
Echo the drear discord, the tuneless tones.
Keep us, dear God, from ill,
What time the Hell-Wind whistles shrill.

The King-Ghost hath no music but their rattling;
No scent but death's grown faint and fugitive;
No light but this their leprous pallor battling
Weakly with night. Lord, shall these dry bones live?
O keep us in the hour
Wherein the King-Ghost hath his power!

The King-Ghost girds me with his gibbering creatures,
My dreams of old that never saw the sun.
He shows me, in a mocking glass, their features,
The twin fiends 'Might-have-been' and 'Should-have-done.'
Keep us, by Jesu's ruth,
What time the King-Ghost grins the truth!

The King-Ghost boasts eternal usurpature
For in this pool of tears his fingers fret
I had imagined, by enduring nature,
The twin gods 'Thus-will-I' and 'May-be-yet.'
God, keep us most from ill,
What time the King-Ghost grips the will!

Silver and rose and gold what flame resurges?
What living light pours forth in emerald waves?
What inmost Music drowns the clamorous dirges?
—Shrieking they fly, the King-Ghost and his slaves.
Lord, let Thy Ghost indwell,
And keep us from the power of Hell!
Amen.