

AUGUSTE RODIN

ROSA COELI

H. D. CARR

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EDITION

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A POEM

BY

H. D. CARR

WITH AN ORIGINAL COMPOSITION BY

AUGUSTE RODIN

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ROSA COELI

ROSE of the World !
Ruby with blood from the bright veins of God
Caught in the chalice of your heart, and pearled
With dew at many a melting period
When the amethyst lustre of your eyes dissolves
The veil that hides your naked splendour
From these inform resolves
And halting loves of your poor poet's soul
With Radiance mild and tender,
So that I see awhile the golden goal !
Yea ! all your light involves
Me, me tenebrous, me too cold and base
Ever to kindle to the maiden face
(Three years my wife, three years of me unwon !)
That would be mine, be mine,
Were I but man enough
To endure the rapture of that sudden sun
The knowledge of your love,
The assumption of me into that sweet shrine

Whose godhead duly knows
Only the one wind of the utmost heaven
Through hyacinthine deeps
Down from the sapphirine steeps
And azure abyss that blows ;
Only the one sun on the steppéd snows ;
Only the one star of the sister seven ;
Only the one moon in the orchard close
In the one hour that unto love is given
Of all the hours of bliss ;
Only the one joy in a world of woes ;
Only the one spark in the storm-cloud riven ;
Only the one shaft through the rose-dawn driven,
Thy shaft, Eros !
Not as Apollo or as Artemis
Loosing gray death from golden thong
To slay the poet in a song,
The lover in a kiss ;
But to divide the inmost marrow
With that ensanguine arrow ;
But to unite each bleeding part
Of that most universal heart ;
Leaving us slaves, and kings ;
Bound, and with eagle's wings ;
One soul, comprising all that may be thought,
One soul, conscious of nought.

II

ROSE of the World! Your mystic petals spread
Like wings over my head.
The tide of burning blood upon my face
Drowns all the floating images
That danced their spectre saraband
In Bacchic race, phantastical embrace,
Upon the sepulchres, the dizzy seas
Of this my mind, Sabbatic rout that spanned
These straits my soul! Ay, they are dead and drowned
(And damned, I doubt!) Ah God! I am exhaust
In the red moon's holocaust!
God! God! The chasms secret and profound
Suck down the porphyry flood
Of your maniacal, ensorcelled blood
That maddens and bewitches.
My life is suffocated—now I swoon—
I die! I am in hell, red hell, red hell,
Circles me closer; all the soul's afire
As if the boreal moon
With all the icy Lapland hags
That shiver on 's hibernal crags
Were but a thin white shell
Hoarding the seed of many a million suns,
Giving its life up unto its desire—
Out bursts the womb of my unguessed-at godhead;

The rose flames out in the flood ; and all at once,
A brilliance disembodied,
I am shattered like the dew upon your leaves ;
So that the lampless hour
Strikes, and an unborn universe perceives
Its lonely mother-flower,
Us, in our love's arcane Briatic bower.
We scatter light, a music-tingling shower ;
We breathe out life, a crimson whisper ;
We radiate love, a velvet-soft complaint,
Most like the echo of a chime at vesper
Rung far across narcissus-haunted leas,
Lilied lagoons, and moon-enchanted seas,
By the high-bosomed boy, large-eyed, with fasting faint,
That shares an hermitage with some devoutest saint.

III

AS, in our life, I passed the awful gate
Where like a Cerberus sate
The triform silence, Fate,
And bade the red blood bloom
Within that Palace of untasted gloom ;
As, in our life, confronting the black forms—
Colossal ghosts, like storms !—
I did abide in the most holy hall
And let the dread word fall,
Nor bade the red axe falter

There as I bowed mine head
Upon the amber altar,
And shed my life out there before ye all,
Careless if I had summoned from the skies
Some young true God, or spoiled the sacrifice,
And were but dead as any man is dead !
So I have given up my inmost life
Even unto you, sweet wife,
Careless—yet conscious of the babe-stirred womb
Of some dread Mother older than the Tomb,
Wiser than Life, more pitiful than Death.

IV

YOUR wine-stained and wine-coloured hair unloosing,
Mingle your wine-wise breath,
Spiritual siren ! with the scent seducing
Your body sheds, scarred with the bleeding kisses
My tenderness bit in,
Like to a lion feeding in wild white wildernesses,
My spirit sensible to your skin :
Mingle them to a crescent character
That shall set shimmering all the parchment fine
And send a steam like wine
Laden with ecstasy and pain
Choral through all the passion-stained and passion-
trembling air.
Inspire a closer strain

Such as strange orchids give, and hyacinths,
Among the broken pedestals and plinths
Where the gray Lords of Time, of Time forgotten,
Lie in the herbage rotten
Of the unpeopled forest.

V

O SONG! O amorous and seducing,
I see thee as thou soarest,
So that, the girders of the soul unloosing,
That Child of you and me, O rose of roses,
That Child whose life encloses
Our lives, is therefore I, may wander ever
By the fritillary-fringed river,
Through lotus gardens of the sleepy gods,
On hills where every timid oread tries
Blue gentian as disguise
From holier (though she think profaner) eyes,
On seas where, it may be, (to even the odds!)
Each nymph and undine issues from the foam
Armed with a pearly mirror and with a coral comb
To tire her beauty, lure me to the lakes
Of light where strikes the day to hyaline floors
Whereon blithe fish and emerald water snakes
Play all the day, and all their innocence adores
Is some old anchor with its rusty flakes
Fallen from God knows what forgotten ship.

No! not in Fancy's palace will I play,
Nor in imagination's deep will dip
The timid foot; but rather will I strip
Each rag of thought, and leap
Into the sunset deep
Still glowing with the glamour
Of your life's blood, and ashen gold
With floating gossamer your hair, that might enfold
A giant god, and strangle him anon
With starry serpents like Laocoon,
A stoic god that might enamour
And draw him with its tendrils into time.

VII

MY mouth was wet with the delicious crime
Of kissing you, one night, when in a vision
Your hair was like a forest of tall pines
In winter; black strange dwarfs with crooked spines
And elfin eyes, and bleating mouths that worked
All manner of grimace and bleak derision
Bore them away; hollow-eyed ghosts that lurked
About the sea made thereof masts; they fitted
Tall ships and goodly, furrowing the deep
To harvest merchandise; strong and keen-witted
The mariners; oho! the breezes leap
Like lovers on them; lo! they faréd forth

To South, East, West and North,
Iceland, the Indies, Sicily, and Spain.
Lo ! men have heard of all these ships not one, not one
for ever more again.

VIII

SEEING your naked body in the bed
Against the jetty silk, I thought you lay
Just as the Milky Way
Lies in the unkenned hollows of the sky.
One swarthy ray of red
Leapt from your hither eye,
And straight my dream began
To map that heaven—your eye, Aldeboran !
I launched the magic boat, and early found
The Pirate's cave and the Enchaunted Ground ;
The cedared Lebanon,
The Wizard's Grot, the well of spice,
The Hanging Gardens of great Babylon :—
All these then did I visit in a trice,
And even did confirm the Bible tale
By playing Jonah to your Jonah's whale.
So, to the stars !

IX

A POET is at ease
In all such voyages :
Why, as a boy, I steered
Up to the Scorpion and tweaked his tail,
Plucked foolish Capricornus by the beard
And kissed the Blessed Damozel that leaned upon the
golden rail,
Drank from the glad rim of the grail
Or soothed the squally Twins (for they could weep !)
And while I smiled “In Heaven how safe I am !”
Found myself in my little bed asleep
Having been butted thither by the Ram.

X

BUT in the dream of you, my starry sweet,
It is my earth I lose six times in seven.
I have the Freedom of the City of Heaven ;
But strange (though fair) are all the stars I meet.
The dull familiar and the homely drear
Are lost for ever. Being asleep, I fear.
Wake ! Let me cut the cable of my mind !
My harbour lies before, and not behind.
Dreams are all lies ; those jetty shadows lie
When the full moon doth crown the midnight sky.
But shadows image truth, and dreams come true,
For when I wake my arms are full of you.

XI

ANOTHER time, through tides from chaos rolled
I was upborne by this my scarabee
With scales like plates of porphyry and gold
And wings like flakes of the green light that pours
Through the blue heart of the Hawaian sea.
So to the hollow shore
We came, and did behold a silver avenue
That wound through cypress groves and woods of yew
Unto the hills; hideous hyaenas laughed,
Mean jackals snarled and screamed, and wild dogs bayed:
Bayed at the waning moon that lapsed above
Out of all light (had I not been in love,
And drunken on the quintessential draught)
So that the forest folk were sore afraid.
But when I came upon the open space
I might perceive my lady's face,
And knew she waned because that I was late.
Twin hills like ivory glinted; on their slopes
Blue rivers coursed, and many a nightingale
Told all its tremulous tale
To viewless dryads, or elate
Trilled out its bleeding hopes
Into the mist of light that hid (I know)
Bassarids, Bassarids Dionysus-mad.
Then, in that vision glad,
I saw twin towers of crimson ruby rise
Into the scented snow

That fell like dew from the heart-hungry skies.
But when I came between the hills, behold
The moon's silver and gold
Stood in the zenith, that I lost my guide.
There stood I passion-pale
Like a lost lamb that seeks the starry fold
Within that warm and scented vale
Clothed with narcissus, hyacinth, tuberoses,
Snowdrop and lily, all white, all cream, all gold,
With never a blush like dawn's to flush or fail
Upon their garden-close.
O wide is the world, wide, wide !
Be sure that I was lost,
Lost, lost for ever ; are there palimpsests
Wherein a man might study at great cost
His journey thence ? O Rose of gramarye,
My riddle you shall see.
My head was happy, laid betwixt your breasts.

XII

ANOTHER time I passed the holy well
And plunged (as Phoebus in the western ocean)
Into a forest of fine flame that crowned
The holy hill ; all was enchanted ground,
The flames like scented tendrils of a vine
Or sensitive rays that spell
Strange curves to match their master-god's emotion.

And ever nearer to the scarlet slash
I clomb, where the strange perfumes struck me like
a lash
And the dread fires scorched up my life.
There, O insufferable delight
I mock with the weak word of wife,
I was sucked down into the crater rim,
Into the crimson damask dim
Candescent cave of night—
O then I mock myself with words !
They are like cardinal-coloured birds
And honey-coloured doves :
Yet one thing mortal serves to name another
As mortal as itself.
Why must our deathless loves
Be stained by the black-hearted mother
That called things by dead names ?
The sunny elf
Language shall play with the ethereal flames
But never dare approach
The central and volcanic fire,
The inmost Force, nor, like a glittering army
Send forth its scouts to encroach
Upon our citadel desire.
Ay ! though these flaming sentences
Eat like strong acid in my vitals, char me,
Blast me like lightning, smash me like black seas
Towering above the lofty ship
Whose masts did menace to the skies,

They are but plaisters of cool leaves that dip
In pleasant water to the white-hot wise
Terrible flames of hell that would devour me,
Did not the raptures of thy love embower me
In meads Elysian, fields of foamless fire,
Nights of invincible desire,
Things beyond words, beyond the want of them,
Beyond the pauses and the ecstasies
Where should my dream get such a diadem
Of voiceless thoughts as these ?

XIII

THESE dreams reform
Themselves into a rainbow to the storm
Of simple passion ; let me from the string
Take many-coloured wing
As a swift-thoughted arrow
Vertically shot against the sun !
I would you were a sow
And these my verses were your squealing farrow
That they might suck the milk of your perfection
Unto them, that the world's ear might be won,
The world's heart melted now,
The world's mind drawn from its dejection,
By the sure fact that not in idle dream
But sole in sense supreme
Certainly visible and tangible

Were you, O Rose, whose root remotest hell
Nourishes, and whose top flowers higher than the Throne
Of the Eternal one.
Thou shouldst not leave me alone
To gaze upon the sun
And take the glory of his excellence—
Not unto me close curled
And on my body's beauty crucified
In silver spirit clad with gold of sense,
But sending forth thy rays life-pearled
As a bridegroom squandering his strength upon the bride
—Thou art sufficient to redeem the world.

XIV

O ! IS the secret of the starry deep
Nothing but pain and pleasure, grief and joy?
Is God a wanton boy
To play with us so bitter cheap
By such a jewelled light? Be thine the power,
Rose of the Stars, in this thy tortured hour
When the wee lips that clung to thee are cold,
To give the world a light of other gold
From that men hoard, from that the suns afford
In their implacable cars
As they roll on impassive; bid thy Lord
(O Rose, Rose of the Stars!)
And slave make known thy beauty and thy passion

In his imperfect fashion,
So that thy wisdom and thy strength are sold
In every mart of earth ;
So that thine eyes enfold
The universe in one great look of love
Bring this, bring this to birth !
And neither hate below, nor hate above,
Nor chance, nor force, nor cunning shall deprive
Man of thy gift, a love alive
With more than men to-day can understand.

XV

GIVE me thine hand,
Rose of the Stars, and we will soar above
Wisdom and Strength and Love,
Into the sphere where all delight retires
In azure flames and silver-edgéd fires.
Now through the veil we shoot
Like snaky lightning through a thundercloud
Up to the awful precipice-skirted place
Where deaf, blind, palsied, mute
There sits the leprous God ; we laugh aloud
Seeing him face to face,
Blowing him like a shaken sheaf of snow
With a brief gust of wind
Over the cliffs of his ensanguine throne ;
Seating ourselves thereon, as men shall know,

Above soul, spirit, heart, thought, being, mind,
All—but most irrevocably entwined
And irrevocably alone.

XVI

THERE was a boy with O! the face of dawn,
The mother-of-pearl that shimmered on his skin,
The breasts like golden roses circling red,
The limbs like limbs of a young fawn
For liveness—O! for innocence of sin
His eyes burned wondrous bright, his sun-crowned head
Danced with its sweet and sacred hopes,
So that he paced the enamelled slopes
Laughing upon the laughing lake below,
Expectant of some strange experience
Worth all the woes of sense,
Some drop of nectar worth a world of wine,
Some grace of One divine
Worth more than all life's grace, and more than life
Intense,
Was there a wonder if the silken boy
Found her a-playing on the bluebell marge
And drank from golden vats the wine of joy;
Hot, eager, overcoming in her breath,
As she would draw him to those large
And firm white breasts and mix her liquid life
With his in pagan strife?

Or with a grace like God, a stealth like love,
Pour on him from above
Wine from the purple vats of death?
Nay! 'tis no wonder—shall they wonder then,
These bat-eyed newspaper-besotted men,
If thou and I have found the Elixir rare
That giveth Life to those whoso drinketh it,
The Stone beyond compare,
The harmony of the Circle and the Square,
All that surpasseth mortal wit
Even to imagine? we have found it, Rose,
Rose of the Stars, Rose of the utmost snows!
Where? Where Love knows.



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