

CHICAGO MAY

CHICAGO MAY
A LOVE POEM

BY
ALEISTER CROWLEY

*The possessor of this copy is earnestly requested
to retain the same under lock and key, and
in nowise to part with it until the year 1964*

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TO AUSTIN HARRISON

CHICAGO MAY

PART I—ROME

DECEMBER

I

THIS is my hour of peace ; the great sow snores,
Blowing out spittle through her blubber lips,
Champagne and lust still oozing from the pores
Of her fat flanks ; then, let my hate eclipse
All other lamps of my pale soul, and flare—
A curst star sparking in the strangled air !

Her shapeless limbs are sticky with stale sweat ;
Yet, she would wake if I withdrew, belch hard
The ferments of the fodder, turn, and fret
This inch that is the ruins of a yard.
Is there no sparrow, ram, ass, bull can stay
The "love"—dear Jesus!—of Chicago May?

II

Like salt pools in a marsh her skin is, soiled
With labours and abortions, stained and red
With her low birth and her high feeding, spoiled
With moles and wens, and fat, fat, fat. To Z

CHICAGO MAY

From A runs this one tale of lust and greed :—
And yet you think men love you. Love, indeed !

Lie still, lie still, and let my heart run on
From hate to—love. I name the one pure word
That she blasphemes ; her life's Satyricon
Would taint all speech ! Yet "love," obscenely purred
From whiskered lips, still sends my spirit home
To God from all this miry martyrdom.

There is a woman, true, fair, wise, and young,
Her soul one flame for art and song, her soul
Pure as the trilling musick of her tongue,
Her heart one flame—for me. The single goal
Of this great purgatory of mine is she.
God grant her hope to her, and mine to me !

[A]

Thou all-beholding sun, whose beams
Comfort the just and the unjust,
Wake me from all these evil dreams
Of this grey globe of greed and lust !
Ah ! that is less than naught to Thee
Which is the all, and more, to me !

This is my grief ; nor God, nor man
Cares what thing earthly may befall.
True self conceives a subtler plan,
Nor heeds the changes in the All.

CHICAGO MAY

True self is to all life immune
As is the sun's self to the moon.

Yet this, that is not love, corrodes
That self, or clouds it. Lead me far
From earth to the unmoved abodes
That lie beyond the utmost star!
Ah, no! the martyr asks his Lord
For martyrdom as his reward.

Give me my pain, and let me keep
My love! I have no fear to lose
My hate: While now she lies asleep,
I have one moment's power to choose.
I choose the cross. My love shall gain
The price of all my Judas-pain.

III

Pure hate is like pure love, a calm, a flow
Of the pure spirit in a single stream;
No wave disturbs its depth; no gleam or glow
Of any light dares break on its supreme
Annihilation of all less desires,
One dark fire that absorbs all shining fires.

So I lie still, and hate, and hate, and hate
This guzzling sow with the loose bulging belly
And sagging teats, whom fate has made my mate,
This itching mass of nastiness, this jelly

CHICAGO MAY

That sets all loathing tingling through my spine,
This hate, hate, hate of this "good luck" of mine!

IV

Good luck! God save us! Is there one thing worth
Gold buys? You bought love; here's the goods!
For health,

Look at the ploughman toiling in the earth!
Disease and hatred won you by your wealth,
And scorn—foul scorn—even from the tipsy knaves
You fling your dollars to, and think them slaves!

Each one of all the maggots that swarm round
Your swollen carcass knows exactly that;
What is too rotten, what is fairly sound,
How much is flesh, and how much more is fat.
Not one thinks otherwise than "Here is meat:
God sends His maggots carrion to eat."

Not one conceives you otherwise. And you,
Do you think otherwise? I sometimes feel
There is some consciousness keeps peering through
Your bat's-eyes, as a soul in hell might steal
To the edge of the abyss that bars salvation,
And glare its knowledge of its own damnation.

V

Is it for this you gorge and swill—to mask
That death's-head? In the senses drown all sense?
For this that love's a toil, a trade, a task,
A labour Hercules might call immense?

CHICAGO MAY

Or are you the mere brute, speech somehow caught
By monkey mimicry—to mimic thought?

You gabble art and music, mouth the names

Of holy poets; sure a brute it is.

Naught human could so prostitute the aims

Of those high souls compact of light and bliss

And truth. Shall mere anatomy refute?

(*The great sow snores*)—oh, certainly a brute!

Yet, if a brute, why should I hate you so?

Because you are my own race turned to dung?

Things nearest to us plague us most, we know.

Why should such "why?" come tripping to my tongue?

It is love's shrine itself that you pollute;

And that is why I hate you, prostitute!

"Make me a baby!" May a cancer gnaw

Your womb! A dropsy make your belly burst!

The word of "baby" in your monstrous maw

Makes God a liar, and his Christ accurst!

"And am I really all your very own?"

"And do you love me for myself alone?"

"And does my darling love his little girl?"

Of five and forty years, and fifteen stone!

"My love!" "My dove!" "My honey-bee!" "My
pearl!"

O it were better to leave well alone!

Without the words, I might confront the suet;

With them, how is it possible to do it?

CHICAGO MAY

VI

Upon the toilet-table stand in rows

Pomatus that had made Canidia queasy.

Now we must change the proverb, I suppose :

"Sweets to the sweet" for "Greases to the greasy."

Yet how can one go adding grease to that

Which is the fount and archetype of fat?

"Skin foods" and "washes," unguents, lotions, creams—

All the devices hitherto invented

For spoiling beauty, in their baddest dreams

That those foul badgers, barbers, never feinted.

It needed Bond Street and the "specialists,"

Apes of those mirror-minded Onanists!

Is there no balm in Gilead? . . . Ah, but soap!

Ah, but hot water and a good rough towel!

"Hope springs eternal"—then there may be hope

That, taking up the pick-axe for the trowel,

And resolute to drive through thick and thin,

We'd excavate the ruins of your skin.

The pioneers know where to delve, for there

Hell's beacon burns, a brazier to absorb

All fats and powders in the world, and flare

A portent, a vast venerable orb!

Redder and shinier sure no sunset glows—

Hail in his setting to the ripe red nose!

CHICAGO MAY

VII

Ah, but the monstrous jewels that you wear,
Until you look like a shop window struck
By lightning, its white velvet soaked—these flare,
Pure sparkles kindled in a mass of muck
By the great light—O God!—of the pure Sun,
Which you avoid "because it freckles one."

Ah, yes, the rings that sink into your fat,
The chains and earrings, theirs no beauty faded!
You are worth hunting (after all) for that,
While there is one fair maiden that unaided
By this may fail to have her will of art
And me—God bless her for her loyal heart!

Men hunt the ermine for its fur; 'tis said
Life's pedlars all have treasure in their load;
The toad has got a jewel in its head—
O Christ of God! I wish you were a toad!
A toad is cold and clammy, it is true;
But you are hot and sticky, and smell too.

VIII

"I thought I was worth something!" Yes, you are;
Worth what the jeweller and the old-clothes-man
And the pork-butcher offer. Soul's a star,
(And that is why no woman ever loathes man.)
If you've that star, how could I "guess it, say,"
From the inspection of your Milky Way?

CHICAGO MAY

It's all so old, so slack, so soiled, so scarred,
So shapeless. Were these really living glands
Once, a pure fount to which a boy clung hard
And held them with his soft, strong, tiny hands?
Well, history says it happened. But a man
After all doesn't want to kiss Queen Anne!

IX

Of all Earth's hateful names I most abhor
The name of Mary. 'Tis a bleat. Of course
You must be Mary. Was there not one sore
God could have spared to such a willing horse?
Turn stripes to satire! So the only way
Has been to cut the R out, and say "May."

R, "the dog's letter." Why you are all R's!
—I pray you pardon the two-pointed prong—
Must you keep up the stale romantic farce
That you love sculpture, harmony, and song?
Your god's your belly, and your pride your shame:
You are well fitted with Madonna's name!

X

(*The great sow snores.*) Ah, but she holds me still.
If I but turned, she would be up and doing,
Crazy with lust or jealousy. Hog-swill
Stirs her to phrenzy, quarrelling or wooing.
Her wreath is mustard-leaves entwined with myrtle:
Her turtle-dove combines the snapping turtle!

CHICAGO MAY

XI

She never lets me from her sight an hour.

On one excuse, five minutes and no more !
And then—even then !—she fears to lose her power.

I hear her heavy breathing at the door :
She listens. "What's he doing?" One confesses
That one must leave you to a pair of guesses.

Or, she will send me out, some time she feels
She is safe, and when my back is turned, she runs
Through all my pockets eagerly, and steals
Each scrap of writing. She was human once :
Her thirty years of whoring have snowed under
All traces of it ; and, by God, no wonder !

She even stole my own vile wage ; she stole
What she had given me herself : she took
The body, wants the mind, would take the soul
If she knew any longer where to look.
No, my good sow. You take what you have paid for ;
The other matters you were never made for.

That is her curse. She feels and knows she has
Nothing of any value, feels and knows
She is cast out for ever, cannot pass
From her own mire to my eternal snows.
She could not, would not ; yet is not exempt
From feeling all my close-concealed contempt.

CHICAGO MAY

XII

Oh, she's not vicious ! All the world delights in
Bores her ; the business of digesting food
(When she's not eating) fills her days and nights in,
Eked out with sleep and soddenness, a mood
Of greed, of gluttony, that no one nice
Would dignify with the fine name of vice.

Vice needs imagination all the time.

It is because the common pleasures pall
That man turns to monstrosity and crime.

But you have need of none of this at all.
You like "what's natural." Right : for you, in sum,
Like Nature's self, abhor a vacuum !

Oh, but there's mind ! There's folk that have a brain,
That need the food of spirit and of heart.

There's folk that need love, pity, peace ; disdain
All that lacks beauty, passion, wit, and art.

Yours is a mind that does not hesitate
To find a word for such—"degenerate."

XIII

It poisons me to think such thoughts : they mar
The crystal of my orgasm of hate.

How can I fling from facets as they are

The unwavering light of it, the focussed fate ?
If I could only speak my thought, its curse
Would char you, blast you from the Universe.

CHICAGO MAY

The ache and spasm of this hate is such
That it blots out myself and you ; it flows
Impersonal, ecstatic ; at the touch
Of language, it is broken up. God knows
How, when He spake the Word, the Absolute
Burst—hence Chicago. Would He had been mute !

No, by the Lord ! This hate is a pure joy
Like everything that's pure . . . (*the great sow snores!*)
That's the catastrophe that breaks the boy !
Even in sleep this hoariest of whores
Maintains her reputation. Keep away
The breath of scandal from Chicago May ! . . .

XIV

I nicknamed you Chicago May because
Your husband was a broker in the "Pit,"
And mother called you Mary ; but the clause
Holds yet another attribution. It
Was a thief, prostitute, assassin—eh?—
Who rots in prison as "Chicago May."

Her name I give you, hers ! She walked the streets,
And picked the pockets of her men ; blackmailed
Them, failing that ; a knife-thrust to complete
Her repertory. That's all. I think she failed
To match your speech and breath : and you could rise
To steal the pennies off a dead man's eyes.

CHICAGO MAY

If I had twopence, you should have it, sure ;
And I would flee, on hygienic grounds.
But as things are, I am extremely poor ;
I owe a matter of five thousand pounds ;
And as I have a girl to help, here goes !
I cannot both help her, and help my nose.

God ! God ! God ! God ! is there no scavenger
To cart this nastiness ? Or can there be
No sewer fit to suck the corpse of her
Into the great, all-purifying sea ?
Her little hand would rather, I opine,
The multitudinous seas incacadine !

XV

If men could hear me, they would smile and say :
How this young satirist exaggerates !
If they could see me, they would all go gray
With horror, know there is no word in hate's
Roll to speak hate, just as in all love's lore
There is no word for love—oh, snore, sow, snore !

I am rigid with my hate ; the brain stands still,
Frozen in hate, the eyes one frightful glare.
Oh, may sleep save me—or the twitch and thrill
Of ecstasy—and yet I hardly dare.
Anything but to wake (dear God, I pray !)
To the mad mauilings of Chicago May.

CHICAGO MAY

PART II—LONDON

JANUARY

I

AND yet I have been faithful : I have tried
All a man might to wake a soul within
The lazar life of you, sought single-eyed
Salvation for you—even through your sin.
Alas! you cannot sin ; for sin means will.
Chicago May can only gorge and swill.

Oh! I have flamed at you, thrust deep my knife
Into the fat about your hampered heart!
I would have taken you to be my wife ;
I would have doctored you with love and art.
With the first quarter-glass of dry champagne
The rift that was clouds hopelessly again.

Ah, but I saw the sunlight! Thrice at least
In these three months that I have lived with you
There was a hint that underneath the beast
Was something human—superhuman too!
Since all that separates mankind from swine
Is that one secret stamp of the Divine!

CHICAGO MAY

II

Could I have forced you once to crystallize
The pure drop that I found—but oh! my fate!
No sooner starts the portent to your eyes
Than in your lust it must evaporate.
I made you think and speak pure thoughts—but deed
Is smothered in your goatishness and greed!

I dragged you to the country, made you walk
And work and wash; but you were too far gone.
Cheese can't be made, I find, by churning chalk.
Eunuchs may safely swill satyrion.
Plaster your cancers while you can; the knife
Comes all too late to give a chance of life.

III

Oh, but the soul is there! as pure and sweet
As if you never had defiled it, pure
Without attaint, impeccable, complete,
Perfect, through all the ages to endure—
Ah! then I love you after all—the years
Dissolved in the black bowl—these bitter tears!

O God! I love you more than I love her,
Because you are lost, because you are mere dung.
That makes your pearl shine! Stark and sinister
The curses wither on my frozen tongue:
My God! My God! let me be damned, me too,
But let me be the means of saving you!

CHICAGO MAY

See! what a love is child of that pure hate,
What hope the heritor of that despair!
All I destroyed I save, I recreate.

What things shall be annihilate what were.
Evil was made that good might come thereby,
And life to show us it is good to die!

IV

O love! O love! lost, lost beyond all hope!
I plunged too deep within the mire! I strove
To master worlds beyond my horoscope:

I sought out hate, and found it only love.
I did invoke pure scorn, and lo! appears
The pale veiled goddess of immortal tears.

Vile, mean, debauched, a mass of muck you are:
'Tis you, and none but you, I came to save.
I leave in heaven my maiden, my sole star;
For you I give my godhead to the grave.
Dung that you are, you have given me the key
To Christ's heart—oh! unveil the Graal for me!

What! you are past redemption thief and whore?
It is for you I must give up my life.
My maid is pure and true; she needs no more.
You are the bitch that I must make my wife.
I love her. Yes: then just that love demands
Renunciation. Ay! love understands.

CHICAGO MAY

V

So snore, sow, snore and stink! Your knight shall keep
The holy vigil at his lady's shrine;
And when you wake, you shall not need to weep—
The grin of your mouth greets the smile of mine.
And when you paw and claw your placid prey
I'll satisfy your lust, Chicago May!

PART III—LA MANCHE

FEBRUARY

I

"THEN Abram raised the knife to slay his son."
Does virtue bring about its own reward?
Not every virtue, nor to every one.
In my case, anyhow, I thank the Lord
That showed me (Glory to the great I AM!)
A thicket, and the horns of—such a ram!

[A]

A worn-out whore that filched the crusts
Of mongrels in Stamboul,
And satisfied its lepers' lusts,
Followed a drunken fool,
Who flung into her face his purse
With his "Be off, bitch!" and a curse.

CHICAGO MAY

She went to a Levantine Jew.

Her bright piastres hire

His sordid service ; to her stew

Behold the wretch retire !

A monster, after four or five

Months, came ; aborted, but alive.

The eunuch of a childless Turk

Was bribed by the head wife—

Oh, substituted wage for work !—

To buy a baby life.

The best the mean slave could procure

Was this—thrown out on some manure.

He took it to the harem, told

The tale ; it wheezed the sot

Whose palsied eyes with rapture rolled

At hearing he had got

In his old age (his youth was wild !)

A real live beautiful male child.

This blinking bastard lived to be

A thief, a renegade,

To cheat at cards, to fight and flee

A volunteer brigade

Of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews

With all to loot, and naught to lose.

He failed to ogle men, but learnt

The art of bilking whores :—

The Turks, who should have had him burnt,

But threw him out of doors.

CHICAGO MAY

He took the name of Bailey Bey
And tried to bilk Chicago May.

Alas ! he found her pearls were sham,
Her jewels coloured glass :—
But not until my Mary's lamb
Had been baptized an ass.
Before the booby could say " knife "
He found that Mary was his wife !

So now by night it's baccarat,
By noon it is blackmail,
Until some windy grandpapa
Arrives to swell their sail—
A combination gambling-hell
And brothel near the Tour Eiffel.

II

Praise the Lord, O my soul ! O praise the Lord !
Praise Him, the Father and the Friend of all,
Whose service is its own most rich reward,
Who never lets a saint or sparrow fall !
From the lions' den He saved their prophet prey,
And me—O praise Him !—from Chicago May.

See ! the grey billows flame between us now !
" Beware of pickpockets, male *and* female "
Moves me to laughter : from the poet's brow
The veil of sorrow drops ; far, pure, and pale
Flames the imagined Goddess—woe is me !
Asperge me hyssopo, Domine !

CHICAGO MAY

Asperge me, mundabor! Make me pure,
And wash me whiter than the snow! That soon
I who have slept in a Chicago sewer
Be worthy of a marriage with the moon!
Oh! but the moon has purity enough,
Lustral for all the least that she might love!

Ah! then my heart flings free to flare afar
Beyond the fierce phantastic flames of foam
To Her, for strength and constancy a star,
For magick she's the moon! to Her! to Home!
"Blow, blow, thou wintry wind!"—and blow away
The last foul fetich of Chicago May!

PART IV—CHERBOURG

MARCH

YES: I am you, but for a moment only.
That leaves an ache: that leaves me less than man.
That leaves me more than God, too sad, too lonely
To do no matter what. Since love began
With the partition of the first one thing
That was itself, there is no hope to be
But the eternal grace—the queen and king
Of no commensurable ecstasy.
Ah God! I am not with you even now:
The New Moon shines on a divided love—
Christ! I will get to you somehow: somehow
I will redeem the affright these cold hours prove.

CHICAGO MAY

May God damn every hour that severs us!
May God excite each hour to holy joy
That breaks the bestially monotonous
Madness and shame of your own boy, your boy
That is no man, no beast, not even God
In those pale hours that you and he apart
Drain the black poison of the period,
Smite all damnation into either heart—
O Jesus! is there pity, is there none?
Is there no peace, no passion in the sky?
Is there no fervour in the blasting sun
To make a symphony of sympathy?
Oh, but if I were only with you—when?—
Who knows if all our passion would suffice
Us who were forced—we, Laylah!—now and then
To bathe our bodies in the vats of vice?
Why is our heaven so critical a point?
Why does life tremble on so tense a string?
Why should so rare an oil as ours anoint
The brazen brows of a usurping king?
Is it not in our right that you and I,
No more you and I, should be some third thing, given
Not by the Gods, nor chance, nor Destiny,
But—by what That that is beyond hell and heaven?
Lost, lost, for ever lost we are; I know
No word to answer the eternal Why,
No spell that may subdue the eternal woe
That "you" are somehow different from "I!"
Lost, lost! O may not death discover spells?
Has not the spasm of dissolution charms?

CHICAGO MAY

Could we not trick this trickery of hell's?—

Suppose we died in one another's arms!

Let us not wait for age to dull our eyes!

Let us take death by his black throat and die!

Let us add murder to our mysteries,

And face the devil together, you and I!

Let us find hope in uttermost despair,

Delight in our division, new desire

In the black fate that takes us unaware,

In death's dark water the eternal fire!

Come, Laylah, come, my sister and my spouse,

Bedeck yourself with nakedness, prepare

To enter the most high, most holy house,

Careless what gods or devils may be there.

Love me! I love you, Laylah! Laylah! mine

Though time and space and force and being discede,

Mine is the magic that has made me thine,

Mine from sublime unconsciousness to deed.

Laylah! oh God! the love of my whole life,

My life centred in a single act,

More than a mistress, wilder than a wife,

Who ratified our diabolic pact?

God grant my life and yours be one, be one,

One beyond possibility, no hour

But bring to ripeness in the royal sun

Some fruit of our fecundity, some flower

Such as no spring of earth or heaven can show;—

Laylah! my Laylah! Laylah! Laylah! mine

Irrevocably from the hour of woe

When I broke in upon the crystal shrine!

CHICAGO MAY

Oh, never falter ! never fail ! forget
No second of the wonders that are past,
Foresee the greater wonders may be yet—
Nail Love, the Son of Man, to murder's mast !
Let us be something unachieved before,
Something intolerable, something new !
Who was the fool that preened himself and swore
There was no further destiny to do ?
Why, every thought is a new spasm of sun !
Is there a new or old in love ? What odds,
Since every one of us—yea, every one !—
Is beyond doubt the darling of the gods ?
Why then, let us die young, let us die young !
Come, Laylah, I shall get to you so soon
This absence, a mere miserere sung,
Seems dream. O moon ! O mortifying moon !
Quicken our love ! O bring me to the hour,
Minute and second when I lose, I lose
All that I am in one fellatrix flower !
Time, O the unsubstantial ! O the ooze
Of nothingness ! Come bring me to the kiss,
The comfort of thine all-availing breast !
Bring me to the intolerable bliss
Whose recrudescence is eternal rest—
Laylah ! I come to you, I come to you—
Three thousand miles, what are they to a soul
Whose insight baffles the blind blaze of blue
With single effort to a single goal ?
Laylah ! I charge you by the love, the love
That you and I bear to each other, come

CHICAGO MAY

To meet me! there's a guerdon far above

All God's in our unalterable sum
Of infinite abasement and success—

Come, let our spirits mingle! bodies follow
According to the grace and kindliness

Of space's master, Zeus, and time's, Apollo.
I love you, Laylah! I am with you now.

One kiss, one kiss! O let us part no more!
One kiss, one kiss on each beloved brow!

One kiss, one kiss where we have kissed before!
I rise, I come to you! I come to you!

You will be maniac to meet with me.
I ride, I race over the bounding blue:—

You will be there to meet me on the quay!

PART V—DOMAINE D'HARDELOT

APRIL

THE full moon, regent of the dunes,
Shines from the sanctifying sea.
This night of nights, this June of Junes,
Is lonely as eternity.

Love, the sole substance that abides,
Reigns on the land and the lagoon;
The drifting sand, the changing tides,
The moving light of the dead moon.

CHICAGO MAY

Love, the sole rock, the fort, the tower,
Whence mortal dauntless may defy
The malice of the age, the power
Of fate or chance or deity !

Even as in moonlight vale and hill
In holy light and holy shade
Are blest, so he that hath his will
In the male mastery of his maid.

Translucent, all my soul is bathed
In that clear potency and calm
Swayed without wind, divinely swathed
In silken silence breathing balm.

The past is past ! the future hangs
A haze of grey to eastward woven,
A haze that only by the pangs
Of the dawn's birth may yet be cloven !

Ah, love ! and may the night discede ?
The dawn that wakes us warn us ? Nay !
The lyre is lively as the reed,
The night less loyal than the day.

These dunes, these stars, these holy trees
That sentinel our sleep, the moan
Of the tired sea, the birds, the breeze,
The moon, all these things are our own.

We made them for our love ! our home,
Our palace of eternal rest :—
Here, by the starlight and the foam,
Fold me, a flower, to your breast !

Of this pamphlet have been printed—

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hereunder.*

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