Chris Laverty
- poems -

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A Night On The Moors

The final embers murmur in the grate -
the flickering ghosts of ravenous flames,
that licked the logs to ashes, that have warmed
this sharp November night - the only sound
rippling this stillness, save the ticking clock,
and faint stirrings of the dog. I listen -
a forgotten sound I can hear - the sound
of silence. And the city noise and heat
that weaves its fabric round my days - a hum
of blurred comings and goings, of bustle,
restless voices, footsteps, traffic - this I
noticed not - 'til now - when I hear it not.

How unquiet was my mind - how little -
swept in the city's unceasing torrent -
did I stop, and notice life? But alone
in this calm retreat, all around I hear
nature's subtle melodies - the river's
soft trickling in the darkness, the crunch
of leave-clothed paths on an afternoon walk,
the gentle winds which these walls encircle;
or see nature's art in colours blended -
yellows, greens and browns - mixed in harmony,
where cottage, brook and bridge a painting form.
In this seclusion I seem to find
a rustic philosophy, that teaches
something of silence and attentiveness;
a philosophy that these hills express
with more eloquence than the choicest words.

Soon I must leave, leave for the bustle,
yet still I'll hope within my heart to hear
the trickling river, and the ticking of the clock,
and dying embers murmuring in the grate.

Chris Laverty
A Nocturnal Wandering

Beneath the revelling moon - that trips the lake,
and does our waking world of shadows paint -
with tuneful pipe he spun the pale light faint,
he spun a song for her, only to wake
to sunlight cold and grey, in which his tune
lifeless lay; which though he threw, then wishing
it to forget - it followed him - while wandering,
late and lone, beneath the revelling moon.

Chris Laverty
A Song About Drinking

Spirited upon your wings
realms enchanted drinking brings,
with a taste the sportive elf
glint-eyed lures me from myself,
piping notes on which I flee
far from daily drudgery.

Vintages from caverns cool
cheer both inner sage and fool -
sooth the spirit's civil strife,
nature's binding blood of life:
reds reflective, deep, demure,
weaving warming myths of fur;
whites urbane, lighthearted, youthful
gleam in glasses ever truthful;
comes the distant smell of seas -
vine rows yielding to the breeze,
pipes I hear upon the mountains -
soon unlock the Muses' fountains,
then the wine the moon and me
make a goodly company,
joined by hoots and trickling brooks,
friends in people or in books.
Else bring ales with earthy charms -
then to village, woods and farms,
minstrels singing homely lays,
shepherds whistling on their ways;
to the evening country dance -
hopeful suitors take their chance,
later gather round the fire,
ernest ghost tales 'til we tire -
creatures strange that cause afright
playing tricks to pass the night
in enchanted forests lost,
gleaming with a midnight frost;
goblins straying late unseen,
round the fresh trimmed bowling green
after village curfew knells -
local myths the parson quells;
Ursula - soothsayer old -
reads what yet the stars may hold,
from her mossy cave sees most,
tracing heaven's wakeful host.

Spirited upon your wings
realms enchanted drinking brings,
piping notes on which I flee
far from daily drudgery.

Chris Laverty
Abyss Of Doubt

I knew one once, who wanted to believe
in something, and to bless it with the breath
with which he played his pipe, and made it weave
songs of youth and friendship, love and death.

And then he sang of wonders near and far,
of sights sublime, on mountains, hills, and sky,
sunsets, lightning, or a falling star -
and sighed, though he knew not the reason why.

He sought for something more, beyond this world
of shadows pale, but peered in an abyss
of doubt - and wished that he again was curled
in warming raiment of unknowing bliss.

Chris Laverty
Autumn Leaves

Leaves - whispering ghosts of Summer's sultry ease,
you languid lie in withered loveliness,
while dreaming in the morning mist; a breeze -
like an Aeolian harp - does you caress,
and does a melancholy music make,
round silent solemn trees you once did dress,

in woods alive, mysterious. You wake,
and dance adieu to nature's subtle song,
and borne by winds your mothers now forsake.

In Springtime born, in Summer you belong;
then Autumn came, and sang its doleful dirge,
and softly summoned down your leafy throng.

Soon Winter winds and rain the earth will purge,
but grieve not, trees - not over is your mirth,
always from darkness nature will emerge;

and though you weary stand in wistful dearth,
yours is the changeless cycle of rebirth.

Chris Laverty
By A Waterfall

Only the lone, resounding roar,
of waters that you tireless pour,
breaks this solitude, silent and still,
as you your ancient task fulfil -
of fresh ablutions at your shrine,
with waters pure and crystalline,
that clamorous the canyon flood,
while bearing homeward nature's blood.

A traveller, in winter's reign,
once stood upon this treeless plain;
thrilled by remote, secluded lands,
unseen, untouched by human hands;
with wild excitement he caught sight
of nature in her noble might,
seen only by a straying bird,
or passing tribesmen with their herd.
The traveller is seen no more,
while still the valleys hear that roar.

One summer's eve, in pious days -
inside a recess hewn by sprays,
two lovers stole in secret tryst,
behind the water's fall and mist;
watched by the sleepless nightingale,
and owl whose hoot a grief did tell,
they came with thirsting hearts that ached
and their forbidden love they slaked.

Perhaps in that incessant surge
lurks a destructive, sightless urge;
and distant sound of marching feet;
a power, force, without reason,
that blindly leads the mind to treason.

Since faded, unrecorded ages,
of shepherds, emperors and sages,
whole nations rise, decay and fall,
but steadfast stands this waterfall;
still bridging valley, hill and shore,
still with your lone, resounding roar.

Chris Laverty
Do Not Wake Him

Some say there is a changeless realm beyond -
more real - where life's Ideals like glaciers gleam,
and all things earthly with them correspond
as lesser shadows of this fettered dream.

But if they're right I do not wish to wake -
I hold a stolen piece of it in you;
and though for you my pipe can only make
poor echoes of its songs - I hope they'll do.

Chris Laverty
Drink Not Too Deep

If beauty be a tingling taste of terror -
drink not too deep; for he who tempted delves
in the beyond - may see a place in error
where unimagined horrors find themselves.
A statue once there was - serene its face,
though round it one traced pain - the eyes
were fixed and riveted - a dreadful place
they spoke of - where the weight of ages lies.
His soul was a mosaic incomplete -
its missing fragments oft in far-flung realms
he sought; new pleasures did his senses greet -
forbidden fruits and spice that overwhelms.
An angel in a vision he was shown -
its beauty absolute turned him to stone.

Chris Laverty
Fallen Days

They stole from heaven fire to meet their needs;
raised up, they less felt nature's fitful lash,
whose pitiless waves their hopes on rocks would dash;
knowledge then bloomed - near wisdom's withered seeds,
as soon they fought themselves with crimson creeds,
and always, somewhere, could be seen the flash,
and heard the distant din of armies clash,
while cenotaphs with glory shrined their deeds.

The ruins of their ancient realm we saw;
technology, from unremembered days,
lies lost; vines clasp their colonnades; a haze
of fallen palaces, temples, courts of law;

their libraries, whose lessons lay unlearnt,
in the midnight of their madness burnt.

Chris Laverty
Freyja

In fertile Asgard, one autumnal day,
the skies hung low, the stags not far would stray.
The goddess Freyja wept red tears of gold,
and seated by the Well of Urd, her sorrow told:

'You valleys, echo far and wide my song,
that might it reach the ears of whom I long -
- my Oor - for you my aching heart still yearns;
though absent long, the flame inside still burns.
As love fades not, but steadfast as a star,
no matter how long you're gone away, or far.
And many faraway lands I've travelled through,
among strange peoples wondered, in search of you.
You trees, tell me, have you my Oor seen?
You rocks, have here his wandering footsteps been?
A soul that's frenzied, frantic, burning bright,
like wolves, whose howling pierces through the night -
- whose sound I'd hear, when on mountains I'd sleep;
night's children, the only company I'd keep.
Through forests, valleys, mountains, I'd wander by,
your name I'd call - its echo the sole reply.
Through villages, markets, streets I'd roam,
among their mortals move, and far from home.
Through all the seasons you I'd restless seek,
just like the furtive fox, though growing weak.
And immortality, now curse it seems,
when my beloved visits only in dreams.
Then Iduun's apples, that bring eternal life -
I'll eat no more, and end this ceaseless strife;
and so grow old, and end this anguished quest
and cross the bridge to Heaven, and there find rest.'

Chris Laverty
Her Final Dream

The wondrous moon, enchantress of the seas - enthroned - its routine watch began that night; Queen Mab, in chariot, on her eyelids light glided; her dreams unlocked with silver keys.

Mab flew apace upon the midnight breeze, and carried her, up to the ether's height, over billowing waves, and alpine regions white, on to the astral sphere - to rest at ease.

Chris Laverty
Idle Hours

The Idle Hours have found me out once more, preyed on my straying thoughts - to murk and mire you've cast them down in chains; lured by your lyre they pace across the starless moors and shore.

You candle - like the flame of time you glow - absorbed, unflinching as the gleaner stern - time's wax its cull; say, have I wax to burn for Idle Hours - say are you friend or foe?

Once more these unembodied voices stir - sighs from the depths, the legacy of years; would I could - when their chorus drowns my ears - could drink forgetfulness - sink in its blur.

Below waves break on these rocks exposed - cold snarl of rocks - what hands could fashion you - what deity such monstrous chaos hew - while skies in majesty remain reposed?

The candle draws me back; away from me - you Idle Hours - soft-summoned by this leisure, weaving your web of half-indulgent pleasure - away from me - you perilous luxury.

Chris Laverty
Last Night

Last night I saw you - still young, turning your head
so gracefully, and laughing - robed in light;
as I on dream's soft fabric gently tread,
while stealing forgetful sleep before daylight.
What was this hazy world? the uncharted land
of final sleep, of neither space nor time?
where we'll watch clouds, and every grain of sand,
until the waking bell of dawn does chime.
The trees no more would lose their leaves; no more
would birds depart for warmer climes, when we
together here will sit for evermore,
and happy to escape life's troubled sea.
We'll hear dreamcatchers tinkle, and incense smell,
and hear the waves, and watch their gentle swell.

Chris Laverty
L'eremita

Away with loneness - he whose winter bites,
who haunts the wasted wilderness and shores,
born in thunder on the misty moors;
who, bred by wolves, with howling fills the nights.
But bring his smooth browed sister Solitude,
decked with autumnal charms and plenitude;
with contemplation's brimming horn of flowers,
and baskets graced with fruit to fill the hours;
often you'll keep the company of dawn,
whose veils of innocence the woods adorn;
and sometimes there, with still and listening ear,
we might the secret songs of nature hear,
or by fountain sit, whose trickling sound
is where forgetful music may be found;
with closed eyes we'll feel it chase away
the phantoms of the mind that haunt the day;
and 'til the birds' soft choir the daylight greets,
we'll walk along the cool and silent streets,
that slumber in the dark with shutters down,
until the traffic will the quietness drown;
or we will walk the idle hours at night
beneath the naked sky; the only light
the lamps that blink beneath the smog and clouds;
and night is human - thoughts arise in crowds
in minds astir like beehives, while hearts swell
like glow worms' tails; there unseen creatures dwell
in graveyard, cricket green, and old inn,
whose chants arise to soothe the daily din;
we'll watch the botanical garden's calm cascades
dance on the moonlit paths and palisades;
hear murmurings of exotic plants and trees,
stirred in the tingling darkness by the breeze;
smell scents of herbs - of rosemary, sage and thyme,
that make the air tell of a distant clime.
But now I hear the mounful sound of train
rousing night, and sigh of passing plane,
as Solitude - to wintry chill you grow;
I feel its sharp breath through my window blow,
and round my door; the hand of loneness cold -
an anguish of the body - takes iron hold;
so now the spring of company I yearn,
but will to sister Solitude return.

Chris Laverty
Lords Of The Tempest

Lords of the tempest - ruling wind and rain
that lash eternally your mountain peak,
feel you the hearts of humans that you pain?
They are your marionettes when you chaos wreak,
and dash on rocks their reason; when on bleak
dead waters of despondency they're bourne,
by raging waves ungovernable thrown;
when cast on Cimmerian shores that know no dawn;
or into the mouth of your maelstrom blown,
as you summon whirlwinds from your throne.

Lords of the tempest - through your sleepless nights
the mariner sails; he hears your thunder peal
over the beckoning deep; yet guiding lights
he traces in the stars that dark reveal,
as he steadfast steers the sea swept wheel.

Chris Laverty
Lorianna

Quaint little Lorianna all adore;
she's raven hair that veils a dove white face;
my thoughts she will not trouble anymore.

Though she inhabits earth she seems of lore,
with eyes where light and darkness interlace;
sweet bitter Lorianna all adore.

She's like the twilight ocean's distant roar,
and in that smile I lovely tempests trace;
my thoughts she will not trouble anymore.

A thousand hearts she'll teasing then ignore,
and they'll give chase, but she does all outpace;
shy sportive Lorianna all adore.

My guileless heart's uprooted to its core,
I wished to win the garland of her grace;
my thoughts she will not trouble anymore.

With love's divine desease I sleepless pace,
and thirst and bleed in an unheeding place;
elusive Lorianna all adore,
my thoughts she will not trouble anymore.

Chris Laverty
Lost Seas

The lights of truth that faithful hung on high -
that lit the restless nights with sacred glow,
sleepless beacons, to sailors far below
adrift in storm - in clouds now shrouded lie;
lost seas they sail beneath a starless sky.
The Muses of sylvan song, long ago
fled their valley; wishful winds there blow,
once fertile springs of Helicon run dry.

But if, when lost in whispering woods alone,
perpetual twilight does your spirit seize;
if, in the land where fleeting shadows groan,
beauty forgotten lies, that might bring ease,
then it is my good fortune, if I have shown
it's balm to you, with small attempts like these.

Chris Laverty
Music Over Water

Sleepless he walked beneath the wakeful sky;
a bright true crowd he saw - and envied them, that in long life burn, and lone ease lie,
or fellowship gather; each silent gem

cheering the blindness that envelops us -
here for a blinking eye, a stolen dream.
Then suddenly there came - breaking the hush -
sweet music drifting on a nearby stream,

accosting him through balmy air. It stirred
his downcast spirit; a windless world he felt
and passing yet eternal moments heard,
and for a moment, with the stars he dwelt.

Chris Laverty
On Animals

Earth, water, air and fire - creation’s daughters -
that ceaseless merge and melt into each other -
as all is one - and he who creatures slaughters
is well to think he kills a distant brother,

as all the winding threads of life are bound
into the web of destiny; if changes
aren’t just in earthly flesh and matter found,
but souls departed likewise make exchanges -

perhaps one day on us is raised the hand
with blade or hammer, if one were a bull
or sow or swine, that ranging on the land
knew not its grisly fate before the cull.

Chris Laverty
On The Uk Leaving The Eu

Though ages leave your chalk white cliffs unchanged -
were I a traveller, they'd not prepare
my spirits for the scene that waits - estranged
your broken days I walk, days full of care;
an unrelieved oppressiveness you wear,
drifting the oceans rudderless - a ship
no captain helms, while through the twilight air
comes luring, voiceless songs - lulled in their grip
the crew in two unruly bands has split,
while jagged rocks you skirt between unmanned -
a passage perilious, round isles that drip
with mists phantasmal, tempting hope for land -
the hope - on bleak horizons, growing near -
a paradise uncharted might appear.

Chris Laverty
Poem

Higher and higher over oceans roaring -
vain was your writhing - captured, fevered snake;
this bird you yearned for - whose claws were knawing
deep in your heart - claws that your thirst might slake -
has dropped you on the waves that heedless break.

Chris Laverty
Snowbound

One morning a visitor had arrived;
that night a blizzard had orchestrated
the whirling snow into a symphony,
and by break of day, the familiar roads,
paths, hedges, gardens of our town now slept,
buried beneath a mantle of pure white.

Startled was nature to a dumb silence,
expelled were the winds to their caves.
Waist high curved the snow, half way up the door,
falling through as we opened it; the dog
leapt with a wild excitement - normal life
was suspended, as roads and schools were closed.
Our world felt a bubble, its troubles
banished, as we played on sledges, finding,
in the cobbled streets of our routine days,
a new world to see, with eyes fresh as the snow.

But deep snow doesn't fall here anymore,
when children play in the streets, when sledges
slide down the hills; each year I hoped for it,
but hoped in vain, until I hoped no more.

Chris Laverty
Summer Storm

Smiling the day is panting low,
sweet whisperings the breezes blow;
your dew drops glisten in the sun,
swelling with kisses - then - you run -
a crack in the sky - lightning strikes
all of nature's put to terror
a rain of daggers - flashing eyes -
eyes fixed with a boiling blood -
silent the trees now empty lie,
shaken they stand and know not why;
the peeping buds still slowly grow,
smiling the day is panting low.

Chris Laverty
The Moonlight Hours

We'll no more pass the moonlight hours
by the riverside,
or share a silence as we stroll
beneath the colonnade.

Or shelter take from sudden showers,
or watch the settling tide,
or lie still when we moments stole
in some forgotten shade.

Those tender days, of light and shade -
the fading summer stole,
and so we'll no more pass the moonlight hours
by the riverside.

Chris Laverty
The Music Of The Night

Tonight I've waited long for sleep, and lie frustrated while I hear a thousand voices tweet unseen, the dark rejoicing with their cheer - the chant of crickets numberless, that stir the thickets murmurous, with ecstasy of melodies, of evening music amorous.

A chorus with harmony as smooth as sweetest symphony in tune; as mild and tender in the dim as pale and slender light of moon; with life infusing dead of night that drapes the musing silence round; the heart beat of the slumbering plains, a gently lapping sea of sound.

A peaceful world of thought this brings, a world now furled in lulling tide; and while the tired body rests, the mind is fired and roving wide; away from aching pangs that gnaw, and clouds that waking day connives, in tranquil sounds of reverie, until the glare of dawn arrives.

Chris Laverty
The Pillar Of Tears

It was an Eastern cistern underground -
a chamber dim of columns; once the key
to waters pure - slaves built it for the free;
a patterned pillar yet unchanged was found
whose frozen tears seemed but to break in sound -
the tears were notes - a silent symphony
of suffering they made - a melody
of unheard souls, that soothed each spirit's wound.
Their voices formed a chorus - this they sang:
'We are the ghosts of tired limb and mind;
how tedious did our despot ruler find
our sorrows - he whose name down ages rang;
the hidden world in life we drifted through,
while monuments majestic shrine the few.'

Chris Laverty
The Shamisen

One night I met a traveller,  
here from an oriental land;  
he little spoke, this wanderer,  
and held a Shamisen in his hand.  
His fingers danced across its strings,  
the music told of far off things:

of an exotic summer haze,  
and rhythm of a rural pace;  
timeless, gentle, carefree days,  
and bustle of a marketplace,  
where people talk and laugh and sigh,  
hurry - or watch the world go by.

The music ceased, his hands fell still,  
with silent nod he bid goodnight.  
That morning, while I climbed a hill,  
I hummed the tune with footsteps light.  
Though fading memory might it steal,  
it's essence still I'll faintly feel.

Chris Laverty
The Trophy

Enwrought around a cup this rustic scene
unfolds: a fisherman there plies his wire
for hearth and bread - nearby, two fox desire
to feast on baskets rich with harvest glean,
and furtive eye the barn with movements keen;
two pale youths nearby stand with hearts on fire,
friends vying for the woman both admire -
her figure full as autumn, face serene.
The cup itself is coveted by swains -
a trophy won with songs in idle time -
not food nor love, but praise might be their prize -
undying hungers in creation's chains;
seized out of time, no final bells will chime
upon these souls - while life flits past their eyes.

Chris Laverty
The Turtle Factory

Down the assembly line we go;
the finishing touch -fitting the soul -
is done - we're manufactured - so -
off the conveyer belt we roll -

- one by one.

We make for the beach and cluster there;
an army of turtles, the lakes are our lair.

We are green like the night,
and in the distance - the city light;
(stay away from the light).

Let's take a swim,
forget about those fields that were deafening and dim.

It's not cold - once you move around a bit;
let the music of the crickets flit
around your ears.

Our tummies are full but sensitive;
(do not upset them, or they'll give).

Let us enjoy this time while we can -
to sleep under a rock shelter,
or float with no particular aim, to swelter -
it's hot - but no more of those fields deafening and dim.

Floating without purpose - perhaps we're just delaying something...

At night small sharks and octopus come out
to hunt; and I clock off, my shift is over,
you will not see me about.
I heard the production line is over....

at a standstill that conveyer belt.

The staff are to be made redundant; I felt
a little cheated - and no sight of the boss still.
I only ever spoke to him once by phone -
but I was cut off - left with just the dialing tone.

I have been writing this letter -
but I'm not sure who to.
Maybe the boss - he'd better
be out there somewhere - he who
set the factory up,

then disappeared...

Has he forgotten about us?

We can crawl on this floating bark tonight;
I cannot be bothered to paddle tonight;
or just sit on the rocks at the bottom of the sea.

Those factories do not change much -
we cluster on the beach.
a sea of turtles, for the beach is alive too;
I have an overgrowth on my neck - it's new,
it marks me out, it's as big as a leech.

Down there, beneath
the water's surface, the rhythm is slow and steady -
just like a grandfather clock; the reef
undulates to the water's swell and eddy -
time is slower - no it really is -
sometimes the emptiness is terrifying.

They fixed our hard shells on
'cos its dangerous out there;
then our caps we don;
through the night air
our dreams will interlace,
becoming one - which place
shall we go to? up to the firament, or down below the sea?

I wonder who ordered us?
They never paid for us,
so we were just released into the wild,
like an unwanted child.

There's many low voices in the forest - hushed -
they harbour grudges and ancient secrets,
dawn is the child of secrets,
hiding in the morning mist.
We must go now to enlist.

Sometimes there's a violent thunderstorm
that breaks the long, hot, dry spells;
all of nature flees, the sky is torn;
we become frozen - we hear those shells -

we were supposed to be an army
of turtles - but a truce was called;
by that point all thought the war was barmy,
so the fighting stalled.

White blossoms have shed themselves
like the milky way over the lake;
they seed things, from them I hear rumours -
about the factory - about a product recall -
about disgruntled customers;
apparently a technical glitch in us all.

In any case one day we'll be replaced - the great designer
has things in store for us - and turtles finer
he is developing. Our time is short.

I need to stay on guard for now -
always my thoughts are drawn to the beach -
there's a row of canoes within easy reach -
no one uses them - but how?

They come out at night,
though I've never seen -
we went over the top once to fight,
trudging through the sludge unseen -

a hail of bullets, a fog of smoke -
slowly we inched over - the din
was deafening - through to the other side we broke -
but they were there - and Him.

crystalline and clean -

a tranquil resting place;
the grass is dancing over my head,
here I could disappear without a trace,
and with no more lies be fed.

Where do the machines go when they die?
Their cemetery is deep in the side
of that mountain - that's where they lie;
it is as old as the earth itself - a guide
takes them to the underworld for devices,
nobody know who rules
that place; there's a ferry to cross the river - the prices?
I don't know; will they take jewels?

I'll take a nap now.

I have no coins for Charon, when
its time to cross the river; they condemn
such people to wander the banks for ninety-nine years instead,
so it is said.

My finances are a mess,
so I'll wander the banks then, I guess.

Chris Laverty
The Valley Of Melancholia

The sky is charged; a veil of frozen dew
enshrouds the earth; the distant hilltops wear
the evening's pall of sullen, sable hue.
Still is the wind. With cries that fill the air,
the haunted voices of the valley share
their secrets awful and enthralling,
of nameless sins and tales appalling,
at which the trees would shudder, the mountains tremble -
with madness laughing is the moon,
conspiring stars bestrew the noon;
something of eeriness pervades
the raw and rugged rocks, the groves and glades.

Who wonders through this valley desolate?
Who, straying late, did Sorrow once accost,
and lead them here? Who came to contemplate
life's mysteries, whose searching hearts had crossed
into this land of doubt - but the path lost?
Up to the heavens they gaze - the vast
and lightless void, that us has cast
on inhospitable seas - they gaze with restless wonder -
but to their burning questions why -
it only echoes in reply;
for them no dogma bears a gleam
of truth that eases life's unquiet dream.

What spirits tread here, delicate and keen?
Spirits that beauty sought with eager eye -
who, finding it furled around a passing scene -
felt ecstasy - twined with a wistful sigh -
as naught the ebbing tides of time defy.
What piper there - whose plaintive sound
the valley echoes far around,
pipes of passing life and love and innocence?
What rhymer in the meadow sings,
sings of the passing of all things,
notes sad as solitary winter bird,
that through the velvet twilight drift unheard?
I knew a soul, on simple pleasures grown,
who of the springs of nature asked not how,
nor why, but trusted all he saw; unknown
lay tangled woods of knowledge near - his brow unclouded still in youth's long dawn. But now
that unrefined and artless faith
has vanished like a fleeting wraith;
exiled from innocence, now sibling of the shadows,
his soul seemed like a hollow shell
where oceans deep of anguish swell;
in suffering's solitude he read
departed minds, and moved among the dead.

A yawning, overflowing emptiness
sighed through the valley's narrow, winding ways;
phantasmal howlings pierced the wilderness,
and beating wings of birds unseen would daze
his weary senses, shattering the haze.
Sometimes despondency became
half-pleasing - soft as candle flame;
at other times it cold and comfortless would grow,
and gleamed as hard and real as bars,
while hope lay distant as the stars,
and then stampeding herds of thunder
with sudden roll would cleave his mind asunder.

When nightfall in the valley did arrive,
he rested deep within its forests dim;
sleepless he saw its shadows come alive -
the puppets of the night stood tall and grim,
whose mocking voices would encircle him.
Yet though this blackness round him crept,
still hope a tireless vigil kept.
One day he climbed the valley's tenebrous crags and steeps,
and saw a rainbow subtly spun,
captured momentarily by the Sun,
within a mist clothed waterfall,
dispersing colours myriad on all.

Since straying in valley long ago,
two voices call him - voices worlds apart;
one from the rainbow - hope's eternal glow,
the other - deep despair's untruthful dart;
both equal reign within his tender heart,
as how the mind contains such scope
for misery - yet equal hope;
as though the voices of the valley call no more -
and though, when downcast, he can find
that rainbow gleaming in his mind -
still, he can sometimes dimly hear
the frantic beating wings of madness growing near.
This Malady

What cure is there to treat this malady -
that since we met, all else seems tinged with grey;
that hunger flees to mountains far away,
and balm of sleep no longer visits me?
That since we met - the joys that used to be
like lights that shone into my waking day,
and filled my dreams with their celestial ray -
now seem vague shadows of my memory?
Only in you is there a cure; to wake,
and watch you sleeping in my arms, and never
to see the morning round the curtains steal;
to make this room our world, let nothing break
this spell that treats my sickness, and forever
only the rhythm of your breath to feel.

Chris Laverty
To A Blackbird

Blackbird - silent sat upon this headstone,
in this antique graveyard wide and drear;
so still - who so suddenly had flown;
do you come - when steals the twilight near -
the secrets of these sleeping souls to hear?

Poet of the shadows, wind swift bird,
tell what shady haunts you've made your home;
haunts your cheering bursts of song have heard?
What woods, fields - secluded - do you roam,
what forsaken dwellings overgrown?

Desolate hilltops, that enchantments hold,
lifeless villages, buildings - that have no Spring;
churches silent, whose statues have grown cold -
yet your voice to them some warmth might bring -
when to yourself, alone, you softly sing.

Blackbird - silent sat upon this headstone,
taking wing now to a nearby tree,
soon perhaps to midnight spots unknown;
gone now, gone far as the eye can see -
unheard tunes are sweeter in my memory.

Chris Laverty
To Winter

Autumn - your sweet yet melancholy strains
die in this air that's tinged with distant chill;
wreathed in your harvest yields that swelled the plains,
you fade from farms and fields whose barns lie still.
The pallid Sun and northern blasts commingle
to sweep away the remnants of your bloom,
while shivers the dreaming earth with inward tingle;
the earth - whose soil was once to seeds a womb,
now bride to Winter, you shall be their tomb.

Winter - descending from your glacial throne,
you cross the tremulous waters, laying siege
with hands of ice to all that Summer's grown,
bounding the barren landscape to your liege.
Now creatures hibernate until the thaw,
hidden beneath the hoarfrost's vestal veils,
like soldiers dug in trenches waiting war;
while communities retreat to inns and ales,
to games and laughter, fireside talk and tales.

Sometimes a sculptor, you work with chisel swift,
when in the deep mid-winter falls snowflakes;
then nimbly guiding their processional drift,
you carve your fine-spun work before day wakes,
decorating scenes with robes of white,
from which an intricate design you mould -
an alpine kingdom fashioned overnight,
beyond the scope of human craft - and bold
it glistens, like a promised land foretold.

In March how patient your encampment lies,
outside the fortified city of the Spring;
your primal beats still echo through the skies
over the bare branched woods where no birds sing.
While dead life strews the battlefield abysmal,
together you wage a struggle for the hand
of Earth, fair daughter of the Sun, though dismal
she lies beneath the frost, seedless as sand,
who this sunless empire must withstand.
Now comes the Sun unsheathed, and Winter flees.  
To native mountain citadels you climb, 
or, by chariot, past the Hebrides 
you soar, back to the terrible Pole sublime. 
Rain washes the vestiges of your cemetery,  
while Spring will nurse the rousing Earth to life,  
whose waking children will from chains us free -  
free us - who cannot free ourselves from strife,  
while Winter in the human heart is rife.

Chris Laverty
Two Cities

Tonight I walked two cities side by side,
walked nameless backstreets by the day forgot;
 saw blank and faceless windows hollow eyed,
behind closed shops that snarled together squat;
heard silent screams that pierced white heated nights,
that stirred the trash the strewed the empty lot.

The city's breath half veiled her neon lights,
veiled buildings tenanted only by the crow,
who pensive seemed from strange unearthly sights.

Those watchful streets my inmost secrets know,
as whispering, my every move they mark.
Then crunching through the crisp and gleaming snow,

warm windows bright I passed that cheered the dark,
as on my way I wondered, homeward bound,
relieved to hear the early morning lark.

The trees seemed tense - unable to expound;
tonight while walking I two cities found.

Chris Laverty
Two Flowers

Two kinds of flowers are in life's garden sown -
the first are words and deeds that spread a name;
for laurel wreaths and eulogies they're grown
that blow such blossoms of the mind to fame.

The second are the flowers of the flesh -
their tenders wish beyond the grave to be
borne down their childrens' bloodlines fresh;
both seek one trophy - immortality.

But fame like footprints washed by time shall fade,
and ancient houses one day heirless lie;
mock coins for dreams sublunary are paid
as growers vainly grasp a vacant sky -

yet what a sadness it would be to view
the garden coloured not by flowers like you.

Chris Laverty