

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Dylan Thomas**

**- poems -**

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## A Child's Christmas in Wales

One Christmas was so much like another, in those years around the sea-town corner now and out of all sound except the distant speaking of the voices I sometimes hear a moment before sleep, that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.

All the Christmases roll down toward the two-tongued sea, like a cold and headlong moon bundling down the sky that was our street; and they stop at the rim of the ice-edged fish-freezing waves, and I plunge my hands in the snow and bring out whatever I can find. In goes my hand into that wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays resting at the rim of the carol-singing sea, and out come Mrs. Prothero and the firemen.

It was on the afternoon of the Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs. Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, though there were no reindeers. But there were cats. Patient, cold and callous, our hands wrapped in socks, we waited to snowball the cats. Sleek and long as jaguars and horrible-whiskered, spitting and snarling, they would slink and sidle over the white back-garden walls, and the lynx-eyed hunters, Jim and I, fur-capped and moccasined trappers from Hudson Bay, off Mumbles Road, would hurl our deadly snowballs at the green of their eyes. The wise cats never appeared.

We were so still, Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the eternal snows - eternal, ever since Wednesday - that we never heard Mrs. Prothero's first cry from her igloo at the bottom of the garden. Or, if we heard it at all, it was, to us, like the far-off challenge of our enemy and prey, the neighbor's polar cat. But soon the voice grew louder.

"Fire!" cried Mrs. Prothero, and she beat the dinner-gong.

And we ran down the garden, with the snowballs in our arms, toward the house; and smoke, indeed, was pouring out of the dining-room, and the gong was bombilating, and Mrs. Prothero was announcing ruin like a town crier in Pompeii. This was better than all the cats in Wales standing on the wall in a row. We bounded into the house, laden with snowballs, and stopped at the open door of the smoke-filled room.

Something was burning all right; perhaps it was Mr. Prothero, who always slept there after midday dinner with a newspaper over his face. But he was standing in the middle of the room, saying, "A fine Christmas!" and smacking at the smoke with a slipper.

"Call the fire brigade," cried Mrs. Prothero as she beat the gong.

"There won't be there," said Mr. Prothero, "it's Christmas."

There was no fire to be seen, only clouds of smoke and Mr. Prothero standing in the middle of them, waving his slipper as though he were conducting.

"Do something," he said. And we threw all our snowballs into the smoke - I think we missed Mr. Prothero - and ran out of the house to the telephone box.

"Let's call the police as well," Jim said. "And the ambulance." "And Ernie Jenkins, he likes fires."

But we only called the fire brigade, and soon the fire engine came and three tall men in helmets brought a hose into the house and Mr. Prothero got out just in time before they turned it on. Nobody could have had a noisier Christmas Eve. And when the

firemen turned off the hose and were standing in the wet, smoky room, Jim's Aunt, Miss. Prothero, came downstairs and peered in at them. Jim and I waited, very quietly, to hear what she would say to them. She said the right thing, always. She looked at the three tall firemen in their shining helmets, standing among the smoke and cinders and dissolving snowballs, and she said, "Would you like anything to read?"

Years and years ago, when I was a boy, when there were wolves in Wales, and birds the color of red-flannel petticoats whisked past the harp-shaped hills, when we sang and wallowed all night and day in caves that smelt like Sunday afternoons in damp front farmhouse parlors, and we chased, with the jawbones of deacons, the English and the bears, before the motor car, before the wheel, before the duchess-faced horse, when we rode the daft and happy hills bareback, it snowed and it snowed. But here a small boy says: "It snowed last year, too. I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea."

"But that was not the same snow," I say. "Our snow was not only shaken from white wash buckets down the sky, it came shawling out of the ground and swam and drifted out of the arms and hands and bodies of the trees; snow grew overnight on the roofs of the houses like a pure and grandfather moss, minutely -ivied the walls and settled on the postman, opening the gate, like a dumb, numb thunder-storm of white, torn Christmas cards."

"Were there postmen then, too?"

"With sprinkling eyes and wind-cherried noses, on spread, frozen feet they crunched up to the doors and mittened on them manfully. But all that the children could hear was a ringing of bells."

"You mean that the postman went rat-a-tat-tat and the doors rang?"

"I mean that the bells the children could hear were inside them."

"I only hear thunder sometimes, never bells."

"There were church bells, too."

"Inside them?"

"No, no, no, in the bat-black, snow-white belfries, tugged by bishops and storks. And they rang their tidings over the bandaged town, over the frozen foam of the powder and ice-cream hills, over the crackling sea. It seemed that all the churches boomed for joy under my window; and the weathercocks crew for Christmas, on our fence."

"Get back to the postmen"

"They were just ordinary postmen, found of walking and dogs and Christmas and the snow. They knocked on the doors with blue knuckles ...."

"Ours has got a black knocker...."

"And then they stood on the white Welcome mat in the little, drifted porches and huffed and puffed, making ghosts with their breath, and jogged from foot to foot like small boys wanting to go out."

"And then the presents?"

"And then the Presents, after the Christmas box. And the cold postman, with a rose on his button-nose, tingled down the tea-tray-slithered run of the chilly glinting hill. He went in his ice-bound boots like a man on fishmonger's slabs. "He wagged his bag like a frozen camel's hump, dizzily turned the corner on one foot, and, by God, he was gone."

"Get back to the Presents."

"There were the Useful Presents: engulfing mufflers of the old coach days, and mittens

made for giant sloths; zebra scarfs of a substance like silky gum that could be tug-o'-warred down to the galoshes; blinding tam-o'-shanters like patchwork tea cozies and bunny-suited busbies and balaclavas for victims of head-shrinking tribes; from aunts who always wore wool next to the skin there were mustached and rasping vests that made you wonder why the aunts had any skin left at all; and once I had a little crocheted nose bag from an aunt now, alas, no longer whinnying with us. And pictureless books in which small boys, though warned with quotations not to, would skate on Farmer Giles' pond and did and drowned; and books that told me everything about the wasp, except why."

"Go on the Useless Presents."

"Bags of moist and many-colored jelly babies and a folded flag and a false nose and a tram-conductor's cap and a machine that punched tickets and rang a bell; never a catapult; once, by mistake that no one could explain, a little hatchet; and a celluloid duck that made, when you pressed it, a most unducklike sound, a mewling moo that an ambitious cat might make who wished to be a cow; and a painting book in which I could make the grass, the trees, the sea and the animals any colour I pleased, and still the dazzling sky-blue sheep are grazing in the red field under the rainbow-billed and pea-green birds. Hardboileds, toffee, fudge and allsorts, crunches, cracknels, humbugs, glaciers, marzipan, and butterwelsh for the Welsh. And troops of bright tin soldiers who, if they could not fight, could always run. And Snakes-and-Families and Happy Ladders. And Easy Hobbi-Games for Little Engineers, complete with instructions. Oh, easy for Leonardo! And a whistle to make the dogs bark to wake up the old man next door to make him beat on the wall with his stick to shake our picture off the wall. And a packet of cigarettes: you put one in your mouth and you stood at the corner of the street and you waited for hours, in vain, for an old lady to scold you for smoking a cigarette, and then with a smirk you ate it. And then it was breakfast under the balloons."

"Were there Uncles like in our house?"

"There are always Uncles at Christmas. The same Uncles. And on Christmas morning, with dog-disturbing whistle and sugar fags, I would scour the swatched town for the news of the little world, and find always a dead bird by the Post Office or by the white deserted swings; perhaps a robin, all but one of his fires out. Men and women wading or scooping back from chapel, with taproom noses and wind-bussed cheeks, all albinos, huddles their stiff black jarring feathers against the irreligious snow. Mistletoe hung from the gas brackets in all the front parlors; there was sherry and walnuts and bottled beer and crackers by the dessertspoons; and cats in their fur-about watched the fires; and the high-heaped fire spat, all ready for the chestnuts and the mulling pokers. Some few large men sat in the front parlors, without their collars, Uncles almost certainly, trying their new cigars, holding them out judiciously at arms' length, returning them to their mouths, coughing, then holding them out again as though waiting for the explosion; and some few small aunts, not wanted in the kitchen, nor anywhere else for that matter, sat on the very edge of their chairs, poised and brittle, afraid to break, like faded cups and saucers."

Not many those mornings trod the piling streets: an old man always, fawn-bowled, yellow-gloved and, at this time of year, with spats of snow, would take his constitutional to the white bowling green and back, as he would take it wet or fire on Christmas Day or Doomsday; sometimes two hale young men, with big pipes blazing, no overcoats and wind blown scarfs, would trudge, unspeaking, down to the forlorn sea, to work up an appetite, to blow away the fumes, who knows, to walk into the

waves until nothing of them was left but the two furling smoke clouds of their inextinguishable briars. Then I would be slap-dashing home, the gravy smell of the dinners of others, the bird smell, the brandy, the pudding and mince, coiling up to my nostrils, when out of a snow-clogged side lane would come a boy the spit of myself, with a pink-tipped cigarette and the violet past of a black eye, cocky as a bullfinch, leering all to himself.

I hated him on sight and sound, and would be about to put my dog whistle to my lips and blow him off the face of Christmas when suddenly he, with a violet wink, put his whistle to his lips and blew so stridently, so high, so exquisitely loud, that gobbling faces, their cheeks bulged with goose, would press against their tinsled windows, the whole length of the white echoing street. For dinner we had turkey and blazing pudding, and after dinner the Uncles sat in front of the fire, loosened all buttons, put their large moist hands over their watch chains, groaned a little and slept. Mothers, aunts and sisters scuttled to and fro, bearing tureens. Auntie Bessie, who had already been frightened, twice, by a clock-work mouse, whimpered at the sideboard and had some elderberry wine. The dog was sick. Auntie Dosie had to have three aspirins, but Auntie Hannah, who liked port, stood in the middle of the snowbound back yard, singing like a big-bosomed thrush. I would blow up balloons to see how big they would blow up to; and, when they burst, which they all did, the Uncles jumped and rumbled. In the rich and heavy afternoon, the Uncles breathing like dolphins and the snow descending, I would sit among festoons and Chinese lanterns and nibble dates and try to make a model man-o'-war, following the Instructions for Little Engineers, and produce what might be mistaken for a sea-going tramcar.

Or I would go out, my bright new boots squeaking, into the white world, on to the seaward hill, to call on Jim and Dan and Jack and to pad through the still streets, leaving huge footprints on the hidden pavements.

"I bet people will think there's been hippos."

"What would you do if you saw a hippo coming down our street?"

"I'd go like this, bang! I'd throw him over the railings and roll him down the hill and then I'd tickle him under the ear and he'd wag his tail."

"What would you do if you saw two hippos?"

Iron-flanked and bellowing he-hippos clanked and battered through the scudding snow toward us as we passed Mr. Daniel's house.

"Let's post Mr. Daniel a snow-ball through his letter box."

"Let's write things in the snow."

"Let's write, 'Mr. Daniel looks like a spaniel' all over his lawn."

Or we walked on the white shore. "Can the fishes see it's snowing?"

The silent one-clouded heavens drifted on to the sea. Now we were snow-blind travelers lost on the north hills, and vast dewlapped dogs, with flasks round their necks, ambled and shambled up to us, baying "Excelsior." We returned home through the poor streets where only a few children fumbled with bare red fingers in the wheel-rutted snow and cat-called after us, their voices fading away, as we trudged uphill, into the cries of the dock birds and the hooting of ships out in the whirling bay. And then, at tea the recovered Uncles would be jolly; and the ice cake loomed in the center of the table like a marble grave. Auntie Hannah laced her tea with rum, because it was only once a year.

Bring out the tall tales now that we told by the fire as the gaslight bubbled like a diver.

Ghosts whooped like owls in the long nights when I dared not look over my shoulder; animals lurked in the cubbyhole under the stairs and the gas meter ticked. And I remember that we went singing carols once, when there wasn't the shaving of a moon to light the flying streets. At the end of a long road was a drive that led to a large house, and we stumbled up the darkness of the drive that night, each one of us afraid, each one holding a stone in his hand in case, and all of us too brave to say a word. The wind through the trees made noises as of old and unpleasant and maybe webfooted men wheezing in caves. We reached the black bulk of the house. "What shall we give them? Hark the Herald?"

"No," Jack said, "Good King Wencelas. I'll count three." One, two three, and we began to sing, our voices high and seemingly distant in the snow-felted darkness round the house that was occupied by nobody we knew. We stood close together, near the dark door. Good King Wencelas looked out On the Feast of Stephen ... And then a small, dry voice, like the voice of someone who has not spoken for a long time, joined our singing: a small, dry, eggshell voice from the other side of the door: a small dry voice through the keyhole. And when we stopped running we were outside our house; the front room was lovely; balloons floated under the hot-water-bottle-gulping gas; everything was good again and shone over the town.

"Perhaps it was a ghost," Jim said.

"Perhaps it was trolls," Dan said, who was always reading.

"Let's go in and see if there's any jelly left," Jack said. And we did that.

Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang "Cherry Ripe," and another uncle sang "Drake's Drum." It was very warm in the little house. Auntie Hannah, who had got on to the parsnip wine, sang a song about Bleeding Hearts and Death, and then another in which she said her heart was like a Bird's Nest; and then everybody laughed again; and then I went to bed. Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-colored snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steady falling night. I turned the gas down, I got into bed. I said some words to the close and holy darkness, and then I slept.

Dylan Thomas

## A Letter to My Aunt

A Letter To My Aunt Discussing The Correct Approach To Modern Poetry

To you, my aunt, who would explore  
The literary Chankley Bore,  
The paths are hard, for you are not  
A literary Hottentot  
But just a kind and cultured dame  
Who knows not Eliot (to her shame).  
Fie on you, aunt, that you should see  
No genius in David G.,  
No elemental form and sound  
In T.S.E. and Ezra Pound.  
Fie on you, aunt! I'll show you how  
To elevate your middle brow,  
And how to scale and see the sights  
From modernist Parnassian heights.

First buy a hat, no Paris model  
But one the Swiss wear when they yodel,  
A bowler thing with one or two  
Feathers to conceal the view;  
And then in sandals walk the street  
(All modern painters use their feet  
For painting, on their canvas strips,  
Their wives or mothers, minus hips).

Perhaps it would be best if you  
Created something very new,  
A dirty novel done in Erse  
Or written backwards in Welsh verse,  
Or paintings on the backs of vests,  
Or Sanskrit psalms on lepers' chests.  
But if this proved imposs-i-ble  
Perhaps it would be just as well,  
For you could then write what you please,  
And modern verse is done with ease.

Do not forget that 'limpet' rhymes  
With 'strumpet' in these troubled times,  
And commas are the worst of crimes;  
Few understand the works of Cummings,  
And few James Joyce's mental slummings,  
And few young Auden's coded chatter;  
But then it is the few that matter.  
Never be lucid, never state,  
If you would be regarded great,  
The simplest thought or sentiment,  
(For thought, we know, is decadent);  
Never omit such vital words  
As belly, genitals and -----,  
For these are things that play a part

(And what a part) in all good art.  
Remember this: each rose is wormy,  
And every lovely woman's germy;  
Remember this: that love depends  
On how the Gallic letter bends;  
Remember, too, that life is hell  
And even heaven has a smell  
Of putrefying angels who  
Make deadly whoopee in the blue.  
These things remembered, what can stop  
A poet going to the top?

A final word: before you start  
The convulsions of your art,  
Remove your brains, take out your heart;  
Minus these curses, you can be  
A genius like David G.

Take courage, aunt, and send your stuff  
To Geoffrey Grigson with my luff,  
And may I yet live to admire  
How well your poems light the fire.

Dylan Thomas



## **A Process in the Weather of the Heart**

A process in the weather of the heart  
Turns damp to dry; the golden shot  
Storms in the freezing tomb.  
A weather in the quarter of the veins  
Turns night to day; blood in their suns  
Lights up the living worm.

A process in the eye forwarns  
The bones of blindness; and the womb  
Drives in a death as life leaks out.

A darkness in the weather of the eye  
Is half its light; the fathomed sea  
Breaks on unangled land.  
The seed that makes a forest of the loin  
Forks half its fruit; and half drops down,  
Slow in a sleeping wind.

A weather in the flesh and bone  
Is damp and dry; the quick and dead  
Move like two ghosts before the eye.

A process in the weather of the world  
Turns ghost to ghost; each mothered child  
Sits in their double shade.  
A process blows the moon into the sun,  
Pulls down the shabby curtains of the skin;  
And the heart gives up its dead.

Dylan Thomas

## **A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London**

Never until the mankind making  
Bird beast and flower  
Fathering and all humbling darkness  
Tells with silence the last light breaking  
And the still hour  
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

And I must enter again the round  
Zion of the water bead  
And the synagogue of the ear of corn  
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound  
Or sow my salt seed  
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn

The majesty and burning of the child's death.  
I shall not murder  
The mankind of her going with a grave truth  
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath  
With any further  
Elegy of innocence and youth.

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,  
Robed in the long friends,  
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,  
Secret by the unmourning water  
Of the riding Thames.  
After the first death, there is no other.

Dylan Thomas

## **After the Funeral (In memory of Ann Jones)**

After the funeral, mule praises, brays,  
Windshake of sailshaped ears, muffle-toed tap  
Tap happily of one peg in the thick  
Grave's foot, blinds down the lids, the teeth in black,  
The spittled eyes, the salt ponds in the sleeves,  
Morning smack of the spade that wakes up sleep,  
Shakes a desolate boy who slits his throat  
In the dark of the coffin and sheds dry leaves,  
That breaks one bone to light with a judgment clout'  
After the feast of tear-stuffed time and thistles  
In a room with a stuffed fox and a stale fern,  
I stand, for this memorial's sake, alone  
In the snivelling hours with dead, humped Ann  
Whose hodded, fountain heart once fell in puddles  
Round the parched worlds of Wales and drowned each sun  
(Though this for her is a monstrous image blindly  
Magnified out of praise; her death was a still drop;  
She would not have me sinking in the holy  
Flood of her heart's fame; she would lie dumb and deep  
And need no druid of her broken body).  
But I, Ann's bard on a raised hearth, call all  
The seas to service that her wood-tongud virtue  
Babble like a bellbuoy over the hymning heads,  
Bow down the walls of the ferned and foxy woods  
That her love sing and swing through a brown chapel,  
Bless her bent spirit with four, crossing birds.  
Her flesh was meek as milk, but this skyward statue  
With the wild breast and blessed and giant skull  
Is carved from her in a room with a wet window  
In a fiercely mourning house in a crooked year.  
I know her scrubbed and sour humble hands  
Lie with religion in their cramp, her threadbare  
Whisper in a damp word, her wits drilled hollow,  
Her fist of a face died clenched on a round pain;  
And sculptured Ann is seventy years of stone.  
These cloud-sopped, marble hands, this monumental  
Argument of the hewn voice, gesture and psalm  
Storm me forever over her grave until  
The stuffed lung of the fox twitch and cry Love  
And the strutting fern lay seeds on the black sill.

Dylan Thomas

## All All and All

### I

All all and all the dry worlds lever,  
Stage of the ice, the solid ocean,  
All from the oil, the pound of lava.  
City of spring, the governed flower,  
Turns in the earth that turns the ashen  
Towns around on a wheel of fire.

How now my flesh, my naked fellow,  
Dug of the sea, the glanded morrow,  
Worm in the scalp, the staked and fallow.  
All all and all, the corpse's lover,  
Skinny as sin, the foaming marrow,  
All of the flesh, the dry worlds lever.

### II

Fear not the waking world, my mortal,  
Fear not the flat, synthetic blood,  
Nor the heart in the ribbing metal.  
Fear not the tread, the seeded milling,  
The trigger and scythe, the bridal blade,  
Nor the flint in the lover's mauling.

Man of my flesh, the jawbone riven,  
Know now the flesh's lock and vice,  
And the cage for the scythe-eyed raver.  
Know, O my bone, the jointed lever,  
Fear not the screws that turn the voice,  
And the face to the driven lover.

### III

All all and all the dry worlds couple,  
Ghost with her ghost, contagious man  
With the womb of his shapeless people.  
All that shapes from the caul and suckle,  
Stroke of mechanical flesh on mine,  
Square in these worlds the mortal circle.

Flower, flower the people's fusion,  
O light in zenith, the coupled bud,  
And the flame in the flesh's vision.  
Out of the sea, the drive of oil,  
Socket and grave, the brassy blood,  
Flower, flower, all all and all.

Dylan Thomas

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Dylan Thomas

## **All That I Owe the Fellows of the Grave**

All that I owe the fellows of the grave  
And all the dead bequeathed from pale estates  
Lies in the fortun'd bone, the flask of blood,  
Like senna stirs along the ravaged roots.  
O all I owe is all the flesh inherits,  
My fathers' loves that pull upon my nerves,  
My sisters tears that sing upon my head  
My brothers' blood that salts my open wounds

Heir to the scalding veins that hold love's drop,  
My fallen filled, that had the hint of death,  
Heir to the telling senses that alone  
Acquaint the flesh with a remembered itch,  
I round this heritage as rounds the sun  
His winy sky, and , as the candles moon,  
Cast light upon my weather. I am heir  
To women who have twisted their last smile,  
To children who were suckled on a plague,  
To young adorers dying on a kiss.  
All such disease I doctor in my blood,  
And all such love's a shrub sown in the breath.

Then look, my eyes, upon this bonehead fortune  
And browse upon the postures of the dead;  
All night and day I eye the ragged globe  
Through periscopes rightsighted from the grave;  
All night and day I wander in these same  
Wax clothes that wax upon the ageing ribs;  
All night my fortune slumbers in its sheet.  
Then look, my heart, upon the scarlet trove,  
And look, my grain, upon the falling wheat;  
All night my fortune slumbers in its sheet.

Dylan Thomas

## Altarwise by Owl-Light

Altarwise by owl-light in the half-way house  
The gentleman lay graveward with his furies;  
Abaddon in the hangnail cracked from Adam,  
And, from his fork, a dog among the fairies,  
The atlas-eater with a jaw for news,  
Bit out the mandrake with to-morrows scream.  
Then, penny-eyed, that gentlemen of wounds,  
Old cock from nowheres and the heaven's egg,  
With bones unbuttoned to the half-way winds,  
Hatched from the windy salvage on one leg,  
Scraped at my cradle in a walking word  
That night of time under the Christward shelter:  
I am the long world's gentlemen, he said,  
And share my bed with Capricorn and Cancer.

Death is all metaphors, shape in one history;  
The child that sucketh long is shooting up,  
The planet-ducted pelican of circles  
Weans on an artery the genders strip;  
Child of the short spark in a shapeless country  
Soon sets alight a long stick from the cradle;  
The horizontal cross-bones of Abaddon,  
You by the cavern over the black stairs,  
Rung bone and blade, the verticals of Adam,  
And, manned by midnight, Jacob to the stars.  
Hairs of your head, then said the hollow agent,  
Are but the roots of nettles and feathers  
Over the groundwrks thrusting through a pavement  
And hemlock-headed in the wood of weathers.

First there was the lamb on knocking knees  
And three dead seasons on a climbing grave  
That Adam's wether in the flock of horns,  
Butt of the tree-tailed worm that mounted Eve,  
Horned down with skullfoot and the skull of toes  
On thunderous pavements in the garden of time;  
Rip of the vaults, I took my marrow-ladle  
Out of the wrinkled undertaker's van,  
And, Rip Van Winkle from a timeless cradle,  
Dipped me breast-deep in the descending bone;  
The black ram, shuffling of the year, old winter,  
Alone alive among his mutton fold,  
We rung our weathering changes on the ladder,  
Said the antipodes, and twice spring chimed.

What is the metre of the dictionary?  
The size of genesis? the short spark's gender?  
Shade without shape? the shape of the Pharaohs echo?  
(My shape of age nagging the wounded whisper.)  
Which sixth of wind blew out the burning gentry?  
(Questions are hunchbacks to the poker marrow.)  
What of a bamboo man among your acres?

Corset the boneyards for a crooked boy?  
Button your bodice on a hump of splinters,  
My camel's eyes will needle through the shroud.  
Loves reflection of the mushroom features,  
Still snapped by night in the bread-sided field,  
Once close-up smiling in the wall of pictures,  
Arc-lamped thrown back upon the cutting flood.

Dylan Thomas



## **Among Those Killed in the Dawn Raid Was a Man Aged a Hundred**

When the morning was waking over the war  
He put on his clothes and stepped out and he died,  
The locks yawned loose and a blast blew them wide,  
He dropped where he loved on the burst pavement stone  
And the funeral grains of the slaughtered floor.  
Tell his street on its back he stopped a sun  
And the craters of his eyes grew springshots and fire  
When all the keys shot from the locks, and rang.  
Dig no more for the chains of his grey-haired heart.  
The heavenly ambulance drawn by a wound  
Assembling waits for the spade's ring on the cage.  
O keep his bones away from the common cart,  
The morning is flying on the wings of his age  
And a hundred storks perch on the sun's right hand.

Dylan Thomas

## **And Death Shall Have No Dominion**

And death shall have no dominion.  
Dead mean naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west moon;  
When their bones are picked clean and the clen bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
Under the windings of the sea  
They lying long shall not die windily;  
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,  
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;  
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,  
And the unicorn evils run them through;  
Split all ends up they shan't crack;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
No more may gulls cry at their ears  
Or waves break loud on the seashores;  
Where blew a flower may a flower no more  
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;  
Through they be mad and dead as nails,  
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;  
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,  
And death shall have no dominion.

Dylan Thomas

## Author's Prologue

This day winding down now  
At God speeded summer's end  
In the torrent salmon sun,  
In my seashaken house  
On a breakneck of rocks  
Tangled with chirrup and fruit,  
Froth, flute, fin, and quill  
At a wood's dancing hoof,  
By scummed, starfish sands  
With their fishwife cross  
Gulls, pipers, cockles, and snails,  
Out there, crow black, men  
Tackled with clouds, who kneel  
To the sunset nets,  
Geese nearly in heaven, boys  
Stabbing, and herons, and shells  
That speak seven seas,  
Eternal waters away  
From the cities of nine  
Days' night whose towers will catch  
In the religious wind  
Like stalks of tall, dry straw,  
At poor peace I sing  
To you strangers (though song  
Is a burning and crested act,  
The fire of birds in  
The world's turning wood,  
For my swan, splay sounds),  
Out of these seathumbed leaves  
That will fly and fall  
Like leaves of trees and as soon  
Crumble and undie  
Into the dogdayed night.  
Seaward the salmon, sucked sun slips,  
And the dumb swans drub blue  
My dabbed bay's dusk, as I hack  
This rumpus of shapes  
For you to know  
How I, a spining man,  
Glory also this star, bird  
Roared, sea born, man torn, blood blest.  
Hark: I trumpet the place,  
From fish to jumping hill! Look:  
I build my bellowing ark  
To the best of my love  
As the flood begins,  
Out of the fountainhead  
Of fear, rage read, manalive,  
Molten and mountainous to stream  
Over the wound asleep  
Sheep white hollow farms  
To Wales in my arms.

Hoo, there, in castle keep,  
You king singsong owls, who moonbeam  
The flickering runs and dive  
The dingle furred deer dead!  
Huloo, on plumbed bryns,  
O my ruffled ring dove  
in the hooting, nearly dark  
With Welsh and reverent rook,  
Coo rooning the woods' praise,  
who moons her blue notes from her nest  
Down to the curlew herd!  
Ho, hullaballoing clan  
Agape, with woe  
In your beaks, on the gabbing capes!  
Heigh, on horseback hill, jack  
Whisking hare! who  
Hears, there, this fox light, my flood ship's  
Clangour as I hew and smite  
(A clash of anvils for my  
Hubbub and fiddle, this tune  
On atounded puffball)  
But animals thick as thieves  
On God's rough tumbling grounds  
(Hail to His beasthood!).  
Beasts who sleep good and thin,  
Hist, in hogback woods! The haystacked  
Hollow farms ina throng  
Of waters cluck and cling,  
And barnroofs cockcrow war!  
O kingdom of neighbors finned  
Felled and quilled, flash to my patch  
Work ark and the moonshine  
Drinking Noah of the bay,  
With pelt, and scale, and fleece:  
Only the drowned deep bells  
Of sheep and churches noise  
Poor peace as the sun sets  
And dark shoals every holy field.  
We will ride out alone then,  
Under the stars of Wales,  
Cry, Multiudes of arks! Across  
The water lidded lands,  
Manned with their loves they'll move  
Like wooden islands, hill to hill.  
Huloo, my prowed dove with a flute!  
Ahoy, old, sea-legged fox,  
Tom tit and Dai mouse!  
My ark sings in the sun  
At God speeded summer's end  
And the flood flowers now.

Dylan Thomas

## **Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait**

The bows glided down, and the coast  
Blackened with birds took a last look  
At his thrashing hair and whale-blue eye;  
The trodden town rang its cobbles for luck.

Then good-bye to the fishermanned  
Boat with its anchor free and fast  
As a bird hooking over the sea,  
High and dry by the top of the mast,

Whispered the affectionate sand  
And the bulwarks of the dazzled quay.  
For my sake sail, and never look back,  
Said the looking land.

Sails drank the wind, and white as milk  
He sped into the drinking dark;  
The sun shipwrecked west on a pearl  
And the moon swam out of its hulk.

Funnels and masts went by in a whirl.  
Good-bye to the man on the sea-legged deck  
To the gold gut that sings on his reel  
To the bait that stalked out of the sack,

For we saw him throw to the swift flood  
A girl alive with his hooks through her lips;  
All the fishes were rayed in blood,  
Said the dwindling ships.

Good-bye to chimneys and funnels,  
Old wives that spin in the smoke,  
He was blind to the eyes of candles  
In the praying windows of waves

But heard his bait buck in the wake  
And tussle in a shoal of loves.  
Now cast down your rod, for the whole  
Of the sea is hilly with whales,

She longs among horses and angels,  
The rainbow-fish bend in her joys,  
Floated the lost cathedral  
Chimes of the rocked buoys.

Where the anchor rode like a gull  
Miles over the moonstruck boat  
A squall of birds bellowed and fell,  
A cloud blew the rain from its throat;

He saw the storm smoke out to kill  
With fuming bows and ram of ice,

Fire on starlight, rake Jesu's stream;  
And nothing shone on the water's face

But the oil and bubble of the moon,  
Plunging and piercing in his course  
The lured fish under the foam  
Witnessed with a kiss.

Whales in the wake like capes and Alps  
Quaked the sick sea and snouted deep,  
Deep the great bushed bait with raining lips  
Slipped the fins of those humpbacked tons

And fled their love in a weaving dip.  
Oh, Jericho was falling in their lungs!  
She nipped and dived in the nick of love,  
Spun on a spout like a long-legged ball

Till every beast blared down in a swerve  
Till every turtle crushed from his shell  
Till every bone in the rushing grave  
Rose and crowed and fell!

Good luck to the hand on the rod,  
There is thunder under its thumbs;  
Gold gut is a lightning thread,  
His fiery reel sings off its flames,

The whirled boat in the burn of his blood  
Is crying from nets to knives,  
Oh the shearwater birds and their boatsized brood  
Oh the bulls of Biscay and their calves

Are making under the green, laid veil  
The long-legged beautiful bait their wives.  
Break the black news and paint on a sail  
Huge weddings in the waves,

Over the wakeward-flashing spray  
Over the gardens of the floor  
Clash out the mounting dolphin's day,  
My mast is a bell-spire,

Strike and smoothe, for my decks are drums,  
Sing through the water-spoken prow  
The octopus walking into her limbs  
The polar eagle with his tread of snow.

From salt-lipped beak to the kick of the stern  
Sing how the seal has kissed her dead!  
The long, laid minute's bride drifts on  
Old in her cruel bed.

Over the graveyard in the water  
Mountains and galleries beneath  
Nightingale and hyena  
Rejoicing for that drifting death

Sing and howl through sand and anemone  
Valley and sahara in a shell,  
Oh all the wanting flesh his enemy  
Thrown to the sea in the shell of a girl

Is old as water and plain as an eel;  
Always good-bye to the long-legged bread  
Scattered in the paths of his heels  
For the salty birds fluttered and fed

And the tall grains foamed in their bills;  
Always good-bye to the fires of the face,  
For the crab-backed dead on the sea-bed rose  
And scuttled over her eyes,

The blind, clawed stare is cold as sleet.  
The tempter under the eyelid  
Who shows to the selves asleep  
Mast-high moon-white women naked

Walking in wishes and lovely for shame  
Is dumb and gone with his flame of brides.  
Susannah's drowned in the bearded stream  
And no-one stirs at Sheba's side

But the hungry kings of the tides;  
Sin who had a woman's shape  
Sleeps till Silence blows on a cloud  
And all the lifted waters walk and leap.

Lucifer that bird's dropping  
Out of the sides of the north  
Has melted away and is lost  
Is always lost in her vaulted breath,

Venus lies star-struck in her wound  
And the sensual ruins make  
Seasons over the liquid world,  
White springs in the dark.

Always good-bye, cried the voices through the shell,  
Good-bye always, for the flesh is cast  
And the fisherman winds his reel  
With no more desire than a ghost.

Always good luck, praised the finned in the feather  
Bird after dark and the laughing fish  
As the sails drank up the hail of thunder  
And the long-tailed lightning lit his catch.

The boat swims into the six-year weather,  
A wind throws a shadow and it freezes fast.  
See what the gold gut drags from under  
Mountains and galleries to the crest!

See what clings to hair and skull  
As the boat skims on with drinking wings!  
The statues of great rain stand still,  
And the flakes fall like hills.

Sing and strike his heavy haul  
Toppling up the boatside in a snow of light!  
His decks are drenched with miracles.  
Oh miracle of fishes! The long dead bite!

Out of the urn a size of a man  
Out of the room the weight of his trouble  
Out of the house that holds a town  
In the continent of a fossil

One by one in dust and shawl,  
Dry as echoes and insect-faced,  
His fathers cling to the hand of the girl  
And the dead hand leads the past,

Leads them as children and as air  
On to the blindly tossing tops;  
The centuries throw back their hair  
And the old men sing from newborn lips:

Time is bearing another son.  
Kill Time! She turns in her pain!  
The oak is felled in the acorn  
And the hawk in the egg kills the wren.

He who blew the great fire in  
And died on a hiss of flames  
Or walked the earth in the evening  
Counting the denials of the grains

Clings to her drifting hair, and climbs;  
And he who taught their lips to sing  
Weeps like the risen sun among  
The liquid choirs of his tribes.

The rod bends low, divining land,  
And through the sundered water crawls



A garden holding to her hand  
With birds and animals

With men and women and waterfalls  
Trees cool and dry in the whirlpool of ships  
And stunned and still on the green, laid veil  
Sand with legends in its virgin laps

And prophets loud on the burned dunes;  
Insects and valleys hold her thighs hard,  
Times and places grip her breast bone,  
She is breaking with seasons and clouds;

Round her trailed wrist fresh water weaves,  
with moving fish and rounded stones  
Up and down the greater waves  
A separate river breathes and runs;

Strike and sing his catch of fields  
For the surge is sown with barley,  
The cattle graze on the covered foam,  
The hills have footed the waves away,

With wild sea fillies and soaking bridles  
With salty colts and gales in their limbs  
All the horses of his haul of miracles  
Gallop through the arched, green farms,

Trot and gallop with gulls upon them  
And thunderbolts in their manes.  
O Rome and Sodom To-morrow and London  
The country tide is cobbled with towns

And steeples pierce the cloud on her shoulder  
And the streets that the fisherman combed  
When his long-legged flesh was a wind on fire  
And his loin was a hunting flame

Coil from the thoroughfares of her hair  
And terribly lead him home alive  
Lead her prodigal home to his terror,  
The furious ox-killing house of love.

Down, down, down, under the ground,  
Under the floating villages,  
Turns the moon-chained and water-wound  
Metropolis of fishes,

There is nothing left of the sea but its sound,  
Under the earth the loud sea walks,  
In deathbeds of orchards the boat dies down  
And the bait is drowned among hayricks,

Land, land, land, nothing remains  
Of the pacing, famous sea but its speech,  
And into its talkative seven tombs  
The anchor dives through the floors of a church.

Good-bye, good luck, struck the sun and the moon,  
To the fisherman lost on the land.  
He stands alone in the door of his home,  
With his long-legged heart in his hand.

Dylan Thomas

## Before I Knocked

Before I knocked and flesh let enter,  
With liquid hands tapped on the womb,  
I who was as shapeless as the water  
That shaped the Jordan near my home  
Was brother to Mnetha's daughter  
And sister to the fathering worm.

I who was deaf to spring and summer,  
Who knew not sun nor moon by name,  
Felt thud beneath my flesh's armour,  
As yet was in a molten form  
The leaden stars, the rainy hammer  
Swung by my father from his dome.

I knew the message of the winter,  
The darted hail, the childish snow,  
And the wind was my sister suitor;  
Wind in me leaped, the hellborn dew;  
My veins flowed with the Eastern weather;  
Ungotten I knew night and day.

As yet ungotten, I did suffer;  
The rack of dreams my lily bones  
Did twist into a living cipher,  
And flesh was snipped to cross the lines  
Of gallow crosses on the liver  
And brambles in the wringing brains.

My throat knew thirst before the structure  
Of skin and vein around the well  
Where words and water make a mixture  
Unfailing till the blood runs foul;  
My heart knew love, my belly hunger;  
I smelt the maggot in my stool.

And time cast forth my mortal creature  
To drift or drown upon the seas  
Acquainted with the salt adventure  
Of tides that never touch the shores.  
I who was rich was made the richer  
By sipping at the vine of days.

I, born of flesh and ghost, was neither  
A ghost nor man, but mortal ghost.  
And I was struck down by death's feather.  
I was a mortal to the last  
Long breath that carried to my father  
The message of his dying christ.

You who bow down at cross and altar,  
Remember me and pity Him  
Who took my flesh and bone for armour

And doublecrossed my mother's womb.

Dylan Thomas

## **Clown in the Moon**

My tears are like the quiet drift  
Of petals from some magic rose;  
And all my grief flows from the rift  
Of unremembered skies and snows.

I think, that if I touched the earth,  
It would crumble;  
It is so sad and beautiful,  
So tremulously like a dream.

Dylan Thomas

## Deaths and Entrances

On almost the incendiary eve  
Of several near deaths,  
When one at the great least of your best loved  
And always known must leave  
Lions and fires of his flying breath,  
Of your immortal friends  
Who'd raise the organs of the counted dust  
To shoot and sing your praise,  
One who called deepest down shall hold his peace  
That cannot sink or cease  
Endlessly to his wound  
In many married London's estranging grief.

On almost the incendiary eve  
When at your lips and keys,  
Locking, unlocking, the murdered strangers weave,  
One who is most unknown,  
Your polestar neighbour, sun of another street,  
Will dive up to his tears.  
He'll bathe his raining blood in the male sea  
Who strode for your own dead  
And wind his globe out of your water thread  
And load the throats of shells  
with every cry since light  
Flashed first across his thunderclapping eyes.

On almost the incendiary eve  
Of deaths and entrances,  
When near and strange wounded on London's waves  
Have sought your single grave,  
One enemy, of many, who knows well  
Your heart is luminous  
In the watched dark, quivering through locks and caves,  
Will pull the thunderbolts  
To shut the sun, plunge, mount your darkened keys  
And sear just riders back,  
Until that one loved least  
Looms the last Samson of your zodiac.

Dylan Thomas

## **Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night**

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on that sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

## **Ears in the Turrets Hear**

Ears in the turrets hear  
Hands grumble on the door,  
Eyes in the gables see  
The fingers at the locks.  
Shall I unbolt or stay  
Alone till the day I die  
Unseen by stranger-eyes  
In this white house?  
Hands, hold you poison or grapes?

Beyond this island bound  
By a thin sea of flesh  
And a bone coast,  
The land lies out of sound  
And the hills out of mind.  
No birds or flying fish  
Disturbs this island's rest.

Ears in this island hear  
The wind pass like a fire,  
Eyes in this island see  
Ships anchor off the bay.  
Shall I run to the ships  
With the wind in my hair,  
Or stay till the day I die  
And welcome no sailor?  
Ships, hold you poison or grapes?

Hands grumble on the door,  
Ships anchor off the bay,  
Rain beats the sand and slates.  
Shall I let in the stranger,  
Shall I welcome the sailor,  
Or stay till the day I die?

Hands of the stranger and holds of the ships,  
Hold you poison or grapes?

Dylan Thomas



## Elegy

Too proud to die; broken and blind he died  
The darkest way, and did not turn away,  
A cold kind man brave in his narrow pride

On that darkest day, Oh, forever may  
He lie lightly, at last, on the last, crossed  
Hill, under the grass, in love, and there grow

Young among the long flocks, and never lie lost  
Or still all the numberless days of his death, though  
Above all he longed for his mother's breast

Which was rest and dust, and in the kind ground  
The darkest justice of death, blind and unblessed.  
Let him find no rest but be fathered and found,

I prayed in the crouching room, by his blind bed,  
In the muted house, one minute before  
Noon, and night, and light. the rivers of the dead

Veined his poor hand I held, and I saw  
Through his unseeing eyes to the roots of the sea.  
(An old tormented man three-quarters blind,

I am not too proud to cry that He and he  
Will never never go out of my mind.  
All his bones crying, and poor in all but pain,

Being innocent, he dreaded that he died  
Hating his God, but what he was was plain:  
An old kind man brave in his burning pride.

The sticks of the house were his; his books he owned.  
Even as a baby he had never cried;  
Nor did he now, save to his secret wound.

Out of his eyes I saw the last light glide.  
Here among the liught of the lording sky  
An old man is with me where I go

Walking in the meadows of his son's eye  
On whom a world of ill's came down like snow.  
He cried as he died, fearing at last the spheres'

Last sound, the world going out without a breath:  
Too proud to cry, too frail to check the tears,  
And caught between two nights, blindness and death.

O deepest wound of all that he should die  
On that darkest day. oh, he could hide  
The tears out of his eyes, too proud to cry.

Until I die he will not leave my side.)

Dylan Thomas

## **Especially When the October Wind**

Especially when the October wind  
With frosty fingers punishes my hair,  
Caught by the crabbing sun I walk on fire  
And cast a shadow crab upon the land,  
By the sea's side, hearing the noise of birds,  
Hearing the raven cough in winter sticks,  
My busy heart who shudders as she talks  
Sheds the syllabic blood and drains her words.

Shut, too, in a tower of words, I mark  
On the horizon walking like the trees  
The wordy shapes of women, and the rows  
Of the star-gestured children in the park.  
Some let me make you of the vowelled beeches,  
Some of the oaken voices, from the roots  
Of many a thorny shire tell you notes,  
Some let me make you of the water's speeches.

Behind a pot of ferns the wagging clock  
Tells me the hour's word, the neural meaning  
Flies on the shafted disk, declaims the morning  
And tells the windy weather in the cock.  
Some let me make you of the meadow's signs;  
The signal grass that tells me all I know  
Breaks with the wormy winter through the eye.  
Some let me tell you of the raven's sins.

Especially when the October wind  
(Some let me make you of autumnal spells,  
The spider-tongued, and the loud hill of Wales)  
With fists of turnips punishes the land,  
Some let me make you of the heartless words.  
The heart is drained that, spelling in the scurry  
Of chemic blood, warned of the coming fury.  
By the sea's side hear the dark-vowelled birds.

Dylan Thomas

## Fern Hill

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs  
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,  
The night above the dingle starry,  
Time let me hail and climb  
Golden in the heydays of his eyes,  
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns  
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves  
Trail with daisies and barley  
Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns  
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,  
In the sun that is young once only,  
Time let me play and be  
Golden in the mercy of his means,  
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves  
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and  
cold,  
And the sabbath rang slowly  
In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay  
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was  
air  
And playing, lovely and watery  
And fire green as grass.  
And nightly under the simple stars  
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,  
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the  
nightjars  
Flying with the ricks, and the horses  
Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white  
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all  
Shining, it was Adam and maiden,  
The sky gathered again  
And the sun grew round that very day.  
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light  
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking  
warm  
Out of the whinnying green stable  
On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house  
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,  
In the sun born over and over,  
I ran my heedless ways,  
My wishes raced through the house high hay  
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows  
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs  
Before the children green and golden

Follow him out of grace.

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would  
take me  
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,  
In the moon that is always rising,  
Nor that riding to sleep  
I should hear him fly with the high fields  
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.  
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,  
Time held me green and dying  
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Dylan Thomas

## Foster the Light

Foster the light nor veil the manshaped moon,  
Nor weather winds that blow not down the bone,  
But strip the twelve-winded marrow from his circle;  
Master the night nor serve the snowman's brain  
That shapes each bushy item of the air  
Into a polestar pointed on an icicle.

Murmur of spring nor crush the cockerel's eggs,  
Nor hammer back a season in the figs,  
But graft these four-fruited ridings on your country;  
Farmer in time of frost the burning leagues,  
By red-eyed orchards sow the seeds of snow,  
In your young years the vegetable century.

And father all nor fail the fly-lord's acre,  
Nor sprout on owl-seed like a goblin-sucker,  
But rail with your wizard's ribs the heart-shaped planet;  
Of mortal voices to the ninnies' choir,  
High lord esquire, speak up the singing cloud,  
And pluck a mandrake music from the marrowroot.

Roll unmanly over this turning tuft,  
O ring of seas, nor sorrow as I shift  
From all my mortal lovers with a starboard smile;  
Nor when my love lies in the cross-boned drift  
Naked among the bow-and-arrow birds  
Shall you turn cockwise on a tufted axle.

Who gave these seas their colour in a shape,  
Shaped my clayfellow, and the heaven's ark  
In time at flood filled with his coloured doubles;  
O who is glory in the shapeless maps,  
Now make the world of me as I have made  
A merry manshape of your walking circle.

Dylan Thomas

## From Love's First Fever to Her Plague

From love's first fever to her plague, from the soft second  
And to the hollow minute of the womb,  
From the unfolding to the scissored caul,  
The time for breast and the green apron age  
When no mouth stirred about the hanging famine,  
All world was one, one windy nothing,  
My world was christened in a stream of milk.  
And earth and sky were as one airy hill.  
The sun and mood shed one white light.

From the first print of the unshodden foot, the lifting  
Hand, the breaking of the hair,  
From the first scent of the heart, the warning ghost,  
And to the first dumb wonder at the flesh,  
The sun was red, the moon was grey,  
The earth and sky were as two mountains meeting.

The body prospered, teeth in the marrowed gums,  
The growing bones, the rumour of the manseed  
Within the hallowed gland, blood blessed the heart,  
And the four winds, that had long blown as one,  
Shone in my ears the light of sound,  
Called in my eyes the sound of light.  
And yellow was the multiplying sand,  
Each golden grain spat life into its fellow,  
Green was the singing house.

The plum my mother picked matured slowly,  
The boy she dropped from darkness at her side  
Into the sided lap of light grew strong,  
Was muscled, matted, wise to the crying thigh,  
And to the voice that, like a voice of hunger,  
Itched in the noise of wind and sun.

And from the first declension of the flesh  
I learnt man's tongue, to twist the shapes of thoughts  
Into the stony idiom of the brain,  
To shade and knit anew the patch of words  
Left by the dead who, in their moonless acre,  
Need no word's warmth.  
The root of tongues ends in a spentout cancer,  
That but a name, where maggots have their X.

I learnt the verbs of will, and had my secret;  
The code of night tapped on my tongue;  
What had been one was many sounding minded.

One wound, one mind, spewed out the matter,  
One breast gave suck the fever's issue;  
From the divorcing sky I learnt the double,  
The two-framed globe that spun into a score;  
A million minds gave suck to such a bud

As forks my eye;  
Youth did condense; the tears of spring  
Dissolved in summer and the hundred seasons;  
One sun, one manna, warmed and fed.

Dylan Thomas



## **Hold Hard, These Ancient Minutes In the Cuckoo's Month**

Hold hard, these ancient minutes in the cuckoo's month,  
Under the lank, fourth folly on Glamorgan's hill,  
As the green blooms ride upward, to the drive of time;  
Time, in a folly's rider, like a county man  
Over the vault of ridings with his hound at heel,  
Drives forth my men, my children, from the hanging south.

Country, your sport is summer, and December's pools  
By crane and water-tower by the seedy trees  
Lie this fifth month unstaked, and the birds have flown;  
Holy hard, my country children in the world if tales,  
The greenwood dying as the deer fall in their tracks,  
The first and steepled season, to the summer's game.

And now the horns of England, in the sound of shape,  
Summon your snowy horsemen, and the four-stringed hill,  
Over the sea-gut loudening, sets a rock alive;  
Hurdles and guns and railings, as the boulders heave,  
Crack like a spring in vice, bone breaking April,  
Spill the lank folly's hunter and the hard-held hope.

Down fall four padding weathers on the scarlet lands,  
Stalking my children's faces with a tail of blood,  
Time, in a rider rising, from the harnessed valley;  
Hold hard, my country darlings, for a hawk descends,  
Golden Glamorgan straightens, to the falling birds.  
Your sport is summer as the spring runs angrily.

Dylan Thomas

## Holy Spring

O  
Out of a bed of love  
When that immortal hospital made one more move to soothe  
The curless counted body,  
And ruin and his causes  
Over the barbed and shooting sea assumed an army  
And swept into our wounds and houses,  
I climb to greet the war in which I have no heart but only  
That one dark I owe my light,  
Call for confessor and wiser mirror but there is none  
To glow after the god stoning night  
And I am struck as lonely as a holy marker by the sun

No  
Praise that the spring time is all  
Gabriel and radiant shrubbery as the morning grows joyful  
Out of the woebegone pyre  
And the multitude's sultry tear turns cool on the weeping wall,  
My arising prodgidal  
Sun the father his quiver full of the infants of pure fire,  
But blessed be hail and upheaval  
That uncalm still it is sure alone to stand and sing  
Alone in the husk of man's home  
And the mother and toppling house of the holy spring,  
If only for a last time.

Dylan Thomas

## How Shall My Animal

How shall my animal  
Whose wizard shape I trace in the cavernous skull,  
Vessel of abscesses and exultation's shell,  
Endure burial under the spelling wall,  
The invoked, shrouding veil at the cap of the face,  
Who should be furious,  
Drunk as a vineyard snail, flailed like an octopus,  
Roaring, crawling, quarrel  
With the outside weathers,  
The natural circle of the discovered skies  
Draw down to its weird eyes?

How shall it magnetize,  
Towards the studded male in a bent, midnight blaze  
That melts the lionhead's heel and horseshoe of the heart  
A brute land in the cool top of the country days  
To trot with a loud mate the haybeds of a mile,  
Love and labour and kill  
In quick, sweet, cruel light till the locked ground sprout  
The black, burst sea rejoice,  
The bowels turn turtle,  
Claw of the crabbed veins squeeze from each red particle  
The parched and raging voice?

Fishermen of mermen  
Creep and harp on the tide, sinking their charmed, bent pin  
With bridebait of gold bread, I with a living skein,  
Tongue and ear in the thread, angle the temple-bound  
Curl-locked and animal cavepools of spells and bone,  
Trace out a tentacle,  
Nailed with an open eye, in the bowl of wounds and weed  
To clasp my fury on ground  
And clap its great blood down;  
Never shall beast be born to atlas the few seas  
Or poise the day on a horn.

Sigh long, clay cold, lie shorn,  
Cast high, stunned on gilled stone; sly scissors ground in frost  
Clack through the thicket of strength, love hewn in pillars drops  
With carved bird, saint, and suns the wrackspiked maiden mouth  
Lops, as a bush plumed with flames, the rant of the fierce eye,  
Clips short the gesture of breath.  
Die in red feathers when the flying heaven's cut,  
And roll with the knocked earth:  
Lie dry, rest robbed, my beast.  
You have kicked from a dark den, leaped up the whinnying light,  
And dug your grave in my breast.

Dylan Thomas

## **I Dreamed My Genesis**

I dreamed my genesis in sweat of sleep, breaking  
Through the rotating shell, strong  
As motor muscle on the drill, driving  
Through vision and the girdered nerve.

From limbs that had the measure of the worm, shuffled  
Off from the creasing flesh, filed  
Through all the irons in the grass, metal  
Of suns in the man-melting night.

Heir to the scalding veins that hold love's drop, costly  
A creature in my bones I  
Rounded my globe of heritage, journey  
In bottom gear through night-gear'd man.

I dreamed my genesis and died again, shrapnel  
Rammed in the marching heart, hole  
In the stitched wound and clotted wind, muzzled  
Death on the mouth that ate the gas.

Sharp in my second death I marked the hills, harvest  
Of hemlock and the blades, rust  
My blood upon the tempered dead, forcing  
My second struggling from the grass.

And power was contagious in my birth, second  
Rise of the skeleton and  
Rerobing of the naked ghost. Manhood  
Spat up from the resuffered pain.

I dreamed my genesis in sweat of death, fallen  
Twice in the feeding sea, grown  
Stale of Adam's brine until, vision  
Of new man strength, I seek the sun.

Dylan Thomas

## **I Followed Sleep**

I followed sleep who kissed me in the brain,  
Let fall the tear of time; the sleeper's eye,  
Shifting to light, turned on me like a moon.  
So, planning-heeled, I flew along my man  
And dropped on dreaming and the upward sky.

I fled the earth and, naked, climbed the weather,  
Reaching a second ground far from the stars;  
And there we wept I and a ghostly other,  
My mothers-eyed, upon the tops of trees;  
I fled that ground as lightly as a feather.

'My fathers' globe knocks on its nave and sings.'  
'This that we tread was, too, your father's land.'  
'But this we tread bears the angelic gangs  
Sweet are their fathered faces in their wings.'  
'These are but dreaming men. Breathe, and they fade.'

Faded my elbow ghost, the mothers-eyed,  
As, blowing on the angels, I was lost  
On that cloud coast to each grave-grabbing shade;  
I blew the dreaming fellows to their bed  
Where still they sleep unknowing of their ghost.

Then all the matter of the living air  
Raised up a voice, and, climbing on the words,  
I spelt my vision with a hand and hair,  
How light the sleeping on this soily star,  
How deep the waking in the worlded clouds.

There grows the hours' ladder to the sun,  
Each rung a love or losing to the last,  
The inches monkeyed by the blood of man.  
And old, mad man still climbing in his ghost,  
My fathers' ghost is climbing in the rain.

Dylan Thomas

## **I Have Longed to Move Away**

I have longed to move away  
From the hissing of the spent lie  
And the old terrors' continual cry  
Growing more terrible as the day  
Goes over the hill into the deep sea;  
I have longed to move away  
From the repetition of salutes,  
For there are ghosts in the air  
And ghostly echoes on paper,  
And the thunder of calls and notes.

I have longed to move away but am afraid;  
Some life, yet unspent, might explode  
Out of the old lie burning on the ground,  
And, crackling into the air, leave me half-blind.  
Neither by night's ancient fear,  
The parting of hat from hair,  
Pursed lips at the receiver,  
Shall I fall to death's feather.  
By these I would not care to die,  
Half convention and half lie.

Dylan Thomas

## I See the Boys of Summer

I

I see the boys of summer in their ruin  
Lay the gold tithings barren,  
Setting no store by harvest, freeze the soils;  
There in their heat the winter floods  
Of frozen loves they fetch their girls,  
And drown the cargoed apples in their tides.

These boys of light are curdlers in their folly,  
Sour the boiling honey;  
The jacks of frost they finger in the hives;  
There in the sun the frigid threads  
Of doubt and dark they feed their nerves;  
The signal moon is zero in their voids.

I see the summer children in their mothers  
Split up the brawned womb's weathers,  
Divide the night and day with fairy thumbs;  
There in the deep with quartered shades  
Of sun and moon they paint their dams  
As sunlight paints the shelling of their heads.

I see that from these boys shall men of nothing  
Stature by seedy shifting,  
Or lame the air with leaping from its hearts;  
There from their hearts the dogdayed pulse  
Of love and light bursts in their throats.  
O see the pulse of summer in the ice.

II

But seasons must be challenged or they totter  
Into a chiming quarter  
Where, punctual as death, we ring the stars;  
There, in his night, the black-tongued bells  
The sleepy man of winter pulls,  
Nor blows back moon-and-midnight as she blows.

We are the dark deniers, let us summon  
Death from a summer woman,  
A muscling life from lovers in their cramp,  
From the fair dead who flush the sea  
The bright-eyed worm on Davy's lamp,  
And from the planted womb the man of straw.

We summer boys in this four-winded spinning,  
Green of the seaweed's iron,  
Hold up the noisy sea and drop her birds,  
Pick the world's ball of wave and froth  
To choke the deserts with her tides,  
And comb the county gardens for a wreath.

In spring we cross our foreheads with the holly,  
Heigh ho the blood and berry,  
And nail the merry squires to the trees;  
Here love's damp muscle dries and dies,  
Here break a kiss in no love's quarry.  
O see the poles of promise in the boys.

### III

I see the boys of summer in their ruin.  
Man in his maggot's barren.  
And boys are full and foreign in the pouch.  
I am the man your father was.  
We are the sons of flint and pitch.  
O see the poles are kissing as they cross.

Dylan Thomas



## I, In My Intricate Image

I

I, in my intricate image, stride on two levels,  
Forged in man's minerals, the brassy orator  
Laying my ghost in metal,  
The scales of this twin world tread on the double,  
My half ghost in armour hold hard in death's corridor,  
To my man-iron side.

Beginning with doom in the bulb, the spring unravels,  
Bright as her spinning-wheels, the colic season  
Worked on a world of petals;  
She threads off the sap and needles, blood and bubble  
Casts to the pine roots, raising man like a mountain  
Out of the naked entrail.

Beginning with doom in the ghost, and the springing marvels,  
Image of images, my metal phantom  
Forcing forth through the harebell,  
My man of leaves and the bronze root, mortal, immortal,  
I, in my fusion of rose and male motion,  
Create this twin miracle.

This is the fortune of manhood: the natural peril,  
A steeplejack tower, bonerailed and masterless,  
No death more natural;  
Thus the shadowless man or ox, and the pictured devil,  
In seizure of silence commit the dead nuisance.  
The natural parallel.

My images stalk the trees and the slant sap's tunnel,  
No tread more perilous, the green steps and spire  
Mount on man's footfall,  
I with the wooden insect in the tree of nettles,  
In the glass bed of grapes with snail and flower,  
Hearing the weather fall.

Intricate manhood of ending, the invalid rivals,  
Voyaging clockwise off the symbolised harbour,  
Finding the water final,  
On the consumptives' terrace taking their two farewells,  
Sail on the level, the departing adventure,  
To the sea-blown arrival.

II

They climb the country pinnacle,  
Twelve winds encounter by the white host at pasture,  
Corner the mounted meadows in the hill corral;  
They see the squirrel stumble,  
The haring snail go giddily round the flower,  
A quarrel of weathers and trees in the windy spiral.

As they dive, the dust settles,  
The cadaverous gravels, falls thick and steadily,  
The highroad of water where the seabear and mackerel  
Turn the long sea arterial  
Turning a petrol face blind to the enemy  
Turning the riderless dead by the channel wall.

(Death instrumental,  
Splitting the long eye open, and the spiral turnkey,  
Your corkscrew grave centred in navel and nipple,  
The neck of the nostril,  
Under the mask and the ether, they making bloody  
The tray of knives, the antiseptic funeral;

Bring out the black patrol,  
Your monstrous officers and the decaying army,  
The sexton sentinel, garrisoned under thistles,  
A cock-on-a-dunghill  
Crowing to Lazarus the morning is vanity,  
Dust be your saviour under the conjured soil.)

As they drown, the chime travels,  
Sweetly the diver's bell in the steeple of spindrift  
Rings out the Dead Sea scale;  
And, clapped in water till the triton dangles,  
Strung by the flaxen whale-weed, from the hangman's raft,  
Hear they the salt glass breakers and the tongues of burial.

(Turn the sea-spindle lateral,  
The grooved land rotating, that the stylus of lightning  
Dazzle this face of voices on the moon-turned table,  
Let the wax disk babble  
Shames and the damp dishonours, the relic scraping.  
These are your years' recorders. The circular world stands still.)

### III

They suffer the undead water where the turtle nibbles,  
Come unto sea-stuck towers, at the fibre scaling,  
The flight of the carnal skull  
And the cell-stepped thimble;  
Suffer, my topsy-turvies, that a double angel  
Sprout from the stony lockers like a tree on Aran.

Be by your one ghost pierced, his pointed ferrule,  
Brass and the bodiless image, on a stick of folly  
Star-set at Jacob's angle,  
Smoke hill and hophead's valley,  
And the five-fathomed Hamlet on his father's coral  
Thrusting the tom-thumb vision up the iron mile.

Suffer the slash of vision by the fin-green stubble,  
Be by the ships' sea broken at the manstring anchored  
The stoved bones' voyage downward  
In the shipwreck of muscle;  
Give over, lovers, locking, and the seawax struggle,  
Love like a mist or fire through the bed of eels.

And in the pincers of the boiling circle,  
The sea and instrument, nicked in the locks of time,  
My great blood's iron single  
In the pouring town,  
I, in a wind on fire, from green Adam's cradle,  
No man more magical, clawed out the crocodile.

Man was the scales, the death birds on enamel,  
Tail, Nile, and snout, a saddler of the rushes,  
Time in the hourless houses  
Shaking the sea-hatched skull,  
And, as for oils and ointments on the flying grail,  
All-hollowed man wept for his white apparel.

Man was Cadaver's masker, the harnessing mantle,  
Windily master of man was the rotten fathom,  
My ghost in his metal neptune  
Forged in man's mineral.  
This was the god of beginning in the intricate seawhirl,  
And my images roared and rose on heaven's hill.

Dylan Thomas

## **If I Were Tickled By the Rub of Love**

If I were tickled by the rub of love,  
A rooking girl who stole me for her side,  
Broke through her straws, breaking my bandaged string,  
If the red tickle as the cattle calve  
Still set to scratch a laughter from my lung,  
I would not fear the apple nor the flood  
Nor the bad blood of spring.

Shall it be male or female? say the cells,  
And drop the plum like fire from the flesh.  
If I were tickled by the hatching hair,  
The winging bone that sprouted in the heels,  
The itch of man upon the baby's thigh,  
I would not fear the gallows nor the axe  
Nor the crossed sticks of war.

Shall it be male or female? say the fingers  
That chalk the walls with greet girls and their men.  
I would not fear the muscling-in of love  
If I were tickled by the urchin hungers  
Rehearsing heat upon a raw-edged nerve.  
I would not fear the devil in the loin  
Nor the outspoken grave.

If I were tickled by the lovers' rub  
That wipes away not crow's-foot nor the lock  
Of sick old manhood on the fallen jaws,  
Time and the crabs and the sweethearting crib  
Would leave me cold as butter for the flies  
The sea of scums could drown me as it broke  
Dead on the sweethearts' toes.

This world is half the devil's and my own,  
Daft with the drug that's smoking in a girl  
And curling round the bud that forks her eye.  
An old man's shank one-marrowed with my bone,  
And all the herrings smelling in the sea,  
I sit and watch the worm beneath my nail  
Wearing the quick away.

And that's the rub, the only rub that tickles.  
The knobby ape that swings along his sex  
From damp love-darkness and the nurse's twist  
Can never raise the midnight of a chuckle,  
Nor when he finds a beauty in the breast  
Of lover, mother, lovers, or his six  
Feet in the rubbing dust.

And what's the rub? Death's feather on the nerve?  
Your mouth, my love, the thistle in the kiss?  
My Jack of Christ born thorny on the tree?  
The words of death are dryer than his stiff,

My wordy wounds are printed with your hair.  
I would be tickled by the rub that is:  
Man be my metaphor.

Dylan Thomas

## **In My Craft or Sullen Art**

In my craft or sullen art  
Exercised in the still night  
When only the moon rages  
And the lovers lie abed  
With all their griefs in their arms  
I labour by singing light  
Not for ambition or bread  
Or the strut and trade of charms  
On the ivory stages  
But for the common wages  
Of their most secret heart.

Not for the proud man apart  
From the raging moon I write  
On these spindrift pages  
Nor for the towering dead  
With their nightingales and psalms  
But for the lovers, their arms  
Round the griefs of the ages,  
Who pay no praise or wages  
Nor heed my craft or art

Dylan Thomas

## **In the Beginning**

In the beginning was the three-pointed star,  
One smile of light across the empty face,  
One bough of bone across the rooting air,  
The substance forked that marrowed the first sun,  
And, burning ciphers on the round of space,  
Heaven and hell mixed as they spun.

In the beginning was the pale signature,  
Three-syllabled and starry as the smile,  
And after came the imprints on the water,  
Stamp of the minted face upon the moon;  
The blood that touched the crosstree and the grail  
Touched the first cloud and left a sign.

In the beginning was the mounting fire  
That set alight the weathers from a spark,  
A three-eyed, red-eyed spark, blunt as a flower,  
Life rose and spouted from the rolling seas,  
Burst in the roots, pumped from the earth and rock  
The secret oils that drive the grass.

In the beginning was the word, the word  
That from the solid bases of the light  
Abstracted all the letters of the void;  
And from the cloudy bases of the breath  
The word flowed up, translating to the heart  
First characters of birth and death.

In the beginning was the secret brain.  
The brain was celled and soldered in the thought  
Before the pitch was forking to a sun;  
Before the veins were shaking in their sieve,  
Blood shot and scattered to the winds of light  
The ribbed original of love.

Dylan Thomas

## **Incarnate Devil**

Incarnate devil in a talking snake,  
The central plains of Asia in his garden,  
In shaping-time the circle stung awake,  
In shapes of sin forked out the bearded apple,  
And God walked there who was a fiddling warden  
And played down pardon from the heavens' hill.

When we were strangers to the guided seas,  
A handmade moon half holy in a cloud,  
The wisemen tell me that the garden gods  
Twined good and evil on an eastern tree;  
And when the moon rose windily it was  
Black as the beast and paler than the cross.

We in our Eden knew the secret guardian  
In sacred waters that no frost could harden,  
And in the mighty mornings of the earth;  
Hell in a horn of sulphur and the cloven myth,  
All heaven in the midnight of the sun,  
A serpent fiddled in the shaping-time.

Dylan Thomas



## January 1939

Because the pleasure-bird whistles after the hot wires,  
Shall the blind horse sing sweeter?  
Convenient bird and beast lie lodged to suffer  
The supper and knives of a mood.  
In the sniffed and poured snow on the tip of the tongue of the year  
That clouts the spittle like bubbles with broken rooms,  
An enamoured man alone by the twigs of his eyes, two fires,  
Camped in the drug-white shower of nerves and food,  
Savours the lick of the times through a deadly wood of hair  
In a wind that plucked a goose,  
Nor ever, as the wild tongue breaks its tombs,  
Rounds to look at the red, wagged root.  
Because there stands, one story out of the bum city,  
That frozen wife whose juices drift like a fixed sea  
Secretly in statuary,  
Shall I, struck on the hot and rocking street,  
Not spin to stare at an old year  
Toppling and burning in the muddle of towers and galleries  
Like the mauled pictures of boys?  
The salt person and blasted place  
I furnish with the meat of a fable.  
If the dead starve, their stomachs turn to tumble  
An upright man in the antipodes  
Or spray-based and rock-chested sea:  
Over the past table I repeat this present grace.

Dylan Thomas

## Lament

When I was a windy boy and a bit  
And the black spit of the chapel fold,  
(Sighed the old ram rod, dying of women),  
I tiptoed shy in the gooseberry wood,  
The rude owl cried like a tell-tale tit,  
I skipped in a blush as the big girls rolled  
Nine-pin down on donkey's common,  
And on seesaw sunday nights I wooed  
Whoever I would with my wicked eyes,  
The whole of the moon I could love and leave  
All the green leaved little weddings' wives  
In the coal black bush and let them grieve.

When I was a gusty man and a half  
And the black beast of the beetles' pews  
(Sighed the old ram rod, dying of bitches),  
Not a boy and a bit in the wick-  
Dipping moon and drunk as a new dropped calf,  
I whistled all night in the twisted flues,  
Midwives grew in the midnight ditches,  
And the sizzling sheets of the town cried, Quick!-  
Whenever I dove in a breast high shoal,  
Wherever I ramped in the clover quilts,  
Whatsoever I did in the coal-  
Black night, I left my quivering prints.

When I was a man you could call a man  
And the black cross of the holy house,  
(Sighed the old ram rod, dying of welcome),  
Brandy and ripe in my bright, bass prime,  
No springtailed tom in the red hot town  
With every simmering woman his mouse  
But a hillocky bull in the swelter  
Of summer come in his great good time  
To the sultry, biding herds, I said,  
Oh, time enough when the blood runs cold,  
And I lie down but to sleep in bed,  
For my sulking, skulking, coal black soul!

When I was half the man I was  
And serve me right as the preachers warn,  
(Sighed the old ram rod, dying of downfall),  
No flailing calf or cat in a flame  
Or hickory bull in milky grass  
But a black sheep with a crumpled horn,  
At last the soul from its foul mousehole  
Slunk pouting out when the limp time came;  
And I gave my soul a blind, slashed eye,  
Gristle and rind, and a roarers' life,  
And I shoved it into the coal black sky  
To find a woman's soul for a wife.

Now I am a man no more no more  
And a black reward for a roaring life,  
(Sighed the old ram rod, dying of strangers),  
Tidy and cursed in my dove cooed room  
I lie down thin and hear the good bells jaw--  
For, oh, my soul found a sunday wife  
In the coal black sky and she bore angels!  
Harpies around me out of her womb!  
Chastity prays for me, piety sings,  
Innocence sweetens my last black breath,  
Modesty hides my thighs in her wings,  
And all the deadly virtues plague my death!

Dylan Thomas

## **Lie Still, Sleep Becalmed**

Lie still, sleep becalmed, sufferer with the wound  
In the throat, burning and turning. All night afloat  
On the silent sea we have heard the sound  
That came from the wound wrapped in the salt sheet.

Under the mile off moon we trembled listening  
To the sea sound flowing like blood from the loud wound  
And when the salt sheet broke in a storm of singing  
The voices of all the drowned swam on the wind.

Open a pathway through the slow sad sail,  
Throw wide to the wind the gates of the wandering boat  
For my voyage to begin to the end of my wound,  
We heard the sea sound sing, we saw the salt sheet tell.  
Lie still, sleep becalmed, hide the mouth in the throat,  
Or we shall obey, and ride with you through the drowned.

Dylan Thomas

## **Light breaks where no sun shines**

Light breaks where no sun shines;  
Where no sea runs, the waters of the heart  
Push in their tides;  
And, broken ghosts with glowworms in their heads,  
The things of light  
File through the flesh where no flesh decks the bones.

A candle in the thighs  
Warms youth and seed and burns the seeds of age;  
Where no seed stirs,  
The fruit of man unwrinkles in the stars,  
Bright as a fig;  
Where no wax is, the candle shows its hairs.

Dawn breaks behind the eyes;  
From poles of skull and toe the windy blood  
Slides like a sea;  
Nor fenced, nor staked, the gushers of the sky  
Spout to the rod  
Divining in a smile the oil of tears.

Night in the sockets rounds,  
Like some pitch moon, the limit of the globes;  
Day lights the bone;  
Where no cold is, the skinning gales unpin  
The winter's robes;  
The film of spring is hanging from the lids.

Light breaks on secret lots,  
On tips of thought where thoughts smell in the rain;  
When logics die,  
The secret of the soil grows through the eye,  
And blood jumps in the sun;  
Above the waste allotments the dawn halts.

Dylan Thomas

## Love In the Asylum

A stranger has come  
To share my room in the house not right in the head,  
A girl mad as birds

Bolting the night of the door with her arm her plume.  
Strait in the mazed bed  
She deludes the heaven-proof house with entering clouds

Yet she deludes with walking the nightmarish room,  
At large as the dead,  
Or rides the imagined oceans of the male wards.

She has come possessed  
Who admits the delusive light through the bouncing wall,  
Possessed by the skies

She sleeps in the narrow trough yet she walks the dust  
Yet raves at her will  
On the madhouse boards worn thin by my walking tears.

And taken by light in her arms at long and dear last  
I may without fail  
Suffer the first vision that set fire to the stars.

Dylan Thomas

## **My Hero Bares His Nerves**

My hero bares his nerves along my wrist  
That rules from wrist to shoulder,  
Unpacks the head that, like a sleepy ghost,  
Leans on my mortal ruler,  
The proud spine spurning turn and twist.

And these poor nerves so wired to the skull  
Ache on the lovelorn paper  
I hug to love with my unruly scrawl  
That utters all love hunger  
And tells the page the empty ill.

My hero bares my side and sees his heart  
Tread; like a naked Venus,  
The beach of flesh, and wind her bloodred plait;  
Stripping my loin of promise,  
He promises a secret heat.

He holds the wire from this box of nerves  
Praising the mortal error  
Of birth and death, the two sad knaves of thieves,  
And the hunger's emperor;  
He pulls that chain, the cistern moves.

Dylan Thomas

## My World Is Pyramid

I

Half of the fellow father as he doubles  
His sea-sucked Adam in the hollow hulk,  
Half of the fellow mother as she dabbles  
To-morrow's diver in her horny milk,  
Bisected shadows on the thunder's bone  
Bolt for the salt unborn.

The fellow half was frozen as it bubbled  
Corrosive spring out of the iceberg's crop,  
The fellow seed and shadow as it babbled  
The swing of milk was tufted in the pap,  
For half of love was planted in the lost,  
And the unplanted ghost.

The broken halves are fellowed in a cripple,  
The crutch that marrow taps upon their sleep,  
Limp in the street of sea, among the rabble  
Of tide-tongued heads and bladders in the deep,  
And stake the sleepers in the savage grave  
That the vampire laugh.

The patchwork halves were cloven as they scudded  
The wild pigs' wood, and slime upon the trees,  
Sucking the dark, kissed on the cyanide,  
And loosed the braiding adders from their hairs,  
Rotating halves are horning as they drill  
The arterial angel.

What colour is glory? death's feather? tremble  
The halves that pierce the pin's point in the air,  
And prick the thumb-stained heaven through the thimble.  
The ghost is dumb that stammered in the straw,  
The ghost that hatched his havoc as he flew  
Blinds their cloud-tracking eye.

II

My world is pyramid. The padded mummer  
Weeps on the desert ochre and the salt  
Incising summer.  
My Egypt's armour buckling in its sheet,  
I scrape through resin to a starry bone  
And a blood parhelion.

My world is cypress, and an English valley.  
I piece my flesh that rattled on the yards  
Red in an Austrian volley.  
I hear, through dead men's drums, the riddled lads,  
Screwing their bowels from a hill of bones,



Cry Eloi to the guns.

My grave is watered by the crossing Jordan.  
The Arctic scut, and basin of the South,  
Drip on my dead house garden.  
Who seek me landward, marking in my mouth  
The straws of Asia, lose me as I turn  
Through the Atlantic corn.

The fellow halves that, cloven as they swivel  
On casting tides, are tangled in the shells,  
Bearding the unborn devil,  
Bleed from my burning fork and smell my heels.  
The tongue's of heaven gossip as I glide  
Binding my angel's hood.

Who blows death's feather? What glory is colour?  
I blow the stammel feather in the vein.  
The loin is glory in a working pallor.  
My clay unsuckled and my salt unborn,  
The secret child, I sift about the sea  
Dry in the half-tracked thigh.

Dylan Thomas

## **Not From This Anger**

Not from this anger, anticlimax after  
Refusal struck her loin and the lame flower  
Bent like a beast to lap the singular floods  
In a land strapped by hunger  
Shall she receive a bellyful of weeds  
And bear those tendril hands I touch across  
The agonized, two seas.  
Behind my head a square of sky sags over  
The circular smile tossed from lover to lover  
And the golden ball spins out of the skies;  
Not from this anger after  
Refusal struck like a bell under water  
Shall her smile breed that mouth, behind the mirror,  
That burns along my eyes.

Dylan Thomas

## Now

Now  
Say nay,  
Man dry man,  
Dry lover mine  
The deadrock base and blow the flowered anchor,  
Should he, for centre sake, hop in the dust,  
Forsake, the fool, the hardness of anger.

Now  
Say nay,  
Sir no say,  
Death to the yes,  
the yes to death, the yesman and the answer,  
Should he who split his children with a cure  
Have brotherless his sister on the handsaw.

Now  
Say nay,  
No say sir  
Yea the dead stir,  
And this, nor this, is shade, the landed crow,  
He lying low with ruin in his ear,  
The cockrel's tide upcasting from the fire.

Now  
Say nay,  
So star fall,  
So the ball fail,  
So solve the mystic sun, the wife of light,  
The sun that leaps on petals through a nought,  
the come-a-cropper rider of the flower.

Now  
Say nay  
A fig for  
The seal of fire,  
Death hairy-heeled and the tapped ghost in wood,  
We make me mystic as the arm of air,  
The two-a-vein, the foreskin, and the cloud.

Dylan Thomas

## **O Make Me A Mask**

O make me a mask and a wall to shut from your spies  
Of the sharp, enamelled eyes and the spectacled claws  
Rape and rebellion in the nurseries of my face,  
Gag of dumbstruck tree to block from bare enemies  
The bayonet tongue in this undefended prayerpiece,  
The present mouth, and the sweetly blown trumpet of lies,  
Shaped in old armour and oak the countenance of a dunce  
To shield the glistening brain and blunt the examiners,  
And a tear-stained widower grief drooped from the lashes  
To veil belladonna and let the dry eyes perceive  
Others betray the lamenting lies of their losses  
By the curve of the nude mouth or the laugh up the sleeve.

Submitted by Venus

Dylan Thomas

## **On a Wedding Anniversary**

The sky is torn across  
This ragged anniversary of two  
Who moved for three years in tune  
Down the long walks of their vows.

Now their love lies a loss  
And Love and his patients roar on a chain;  
From every tune or crater  
Carrying cloud, Death strikes their house.

Too late in the wrong rain  
They come together whom their love parted:  
The windows pour into their heart  
And the doors burn in their brain.

Dylan Thomas

## **On No Work of Words**

On no work of words now for three lean months in the  
bloody  
Belly of the rich year and the big purse of my body  
I bitterly take to task my poverty and craft:

To take to give is all, return what is hungrily given  
Puffing the pounds of manna up through the dew to heaven,  
The lovely gift of the gab bangs back on a blind shaft.

To lift to leave from treasures of man is pleasing death  
That will rake at last all currencies of the marked breath  
And count the taken, forsaken mysteries in a bad dark.

To surrender now is to pay the expensive ogre twice.  
Ancient woods of my blood, dash down to the nut of the seas  
If I take to burn or return this world which is each man's  
work.

Dylan Thomas

## **Once It Was the Colour of Saying**

Once it was the colour of saying  
Soaked my table the uglier side of a hill  
With a capsized field where a school sat still  
And a black and white patch of girls grew playing;  
The gentle seaslides of saying I must undo  
That all the charmingly drowned arise to cockcrow and kill.  
When I whistled with mitching boys through a reservoir park  
Where at night we stoned the cold and cuckoo  
Lovers in the dirt of their leafy beds,  
The shade of their trees was a word of many shades  
And a lamp of lightning for the poor in the dark;  
Now my saying shall be my undoing,  
And every stone I wind off like a reel.

Dylan Thomas

## Our Eunuch Dreams

I

Our eunuch dreams, all seedless in the light,  
Of light and love the tempers of the heart,  
Whack their boys' limbs,  
And, winding-footed in their shawl and sheet,  
Groom the dark brides, the widows of the night  
Fold in their arms.

The shades of girls, all flavoured from their shrouds,  
When sunlight goes are sundered from the worm,  
The bones of men, the broken in their beds,  
By midnight pulleys that unhouse the tomb.

II

In this our age the gunman and his moll  
Two one-dimensional ghosts, love on a reel,  
Strange to our solid eye,  
And speak their midnight nothings as they swell;  
When cameras shut they hurry to their hole  
down in the yard of day.

They dance between their arclamps and our skull,  
Impose their shots, showing the nights away;  
We watch the show of shadows kiss or kill  
Flavoured of celluloid give love the lie.

III

Which is the world? Of our two sleepings, which  
Shall fall awake when cures and their itch  
Raise up this red-eyed earth?  
Pack off the shapes of daylight and their starch,  
The sunny gentlemen, the Welshing rich,  
Or drive the night-gear'd forth.

The photograph is married to the eye,  
Grafts on its bride one-sided skins of truth;  
The dream has sucked the sleeper of his faith  
That shrouded men might marrow as they fly.

IV

This is the world; the lying likeness of  
Our strips of stuff that tatter as we move  
Loving and being loth;  
The dream that kicks the buried from their sack  
And lets their trash be honoured as the quick.  
This is the world. Have faith.

For we shall be a shouter like the cock,



Blowing the old dead back; our shots shall smack  
The image from the plates;  
And we shall be fit fellows for a life,  
And who remains shall flower as they love,  
Praise to our faring hearts.

Dylan Thomas

## Poem In October

It was my thirtieth year to heaven  
Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood  
And the mussel pooled and the heron  
Priested shore  
The morning beckon  
With water praying and call of seagull and rook  
And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall  
Myself to set foot  
That second  
In the still sleeping town and set forth.

My birthday began with the water-  
Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name  
Above the farms and the white horses  
And I rose  
In rainy autumn  
And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.  
High tide and the heron dived when I took the road  
Over the border  
And the gates  
Of the town closed as the town awoke.

A springful of larks in a rolling  
Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling  
Blackbirds and the sun of October  
Summery  
On the hill's shoulder,  
Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly  
Come in the morning where I wandered and listened  
To the rain wringing  
Wind blow cold  
In the wood faraway under me.

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour  
And over the sea wet church the size of a snail  
With its horns through mist and the castle  
Brown as owls  
But all the gardens  
Of spring and summer were blooming in the tall tales  
Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud.  
There could I marvel  
My birthday  
Away but the weather turned around.

It turned away from the blithe country  
And down the other air and the blue altered sky  
Streamed again a wonder of summer  
With apples  
Pears and red currants  
And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's  
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother  
Through the parables

Of sun light  
And the legends of the green chapels

And the twice told fields of infancy  
That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine.  
These were the woods the river and sea  
Where a boy  
In the listening  
Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy  
To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.  
And the mystery  
Sang alive  
Still in the water and singingbirds.

And there could I marvel my birthday  
Away but the weather turned around. And the true  
Joy of the long dead child sang burning  
In the sun.  
It was my thirtieth  
Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon  
Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.  
O may my heart's truth  
Still be sung  
On this high hill in a year's turning.

Dylan Thomas

## Poem on his Birthday

In the mustardseed sun,  
By full tilt river and switchback sea  
Where the cormorants scud,  
In his house on stilts high among beaks  
And palavers of birds  
This sandgrain day in the bent bay's grave  
He celebrates and spurns  
His driftwood thirty-fifth wind turned age;  
Herons spire and spear.

Under and round him go  
Flounders, gulls, on their cold, dying trails,  
Doing what they are told,  
Curlews aloud in the congered waves  
Work at their ways to death,  
And the rhymer in the long tongued room,  
Who tolls his birthday bell,  
Toesl towards the ambush of his wounds;  
Herons, stepple stemmed, bless.

In the thistledown fall,  
He sings towards anguish; finches fly  
In the claw tracks of hawks  
On a seizing sky; small fishes glide  
Through wynds and shells of drowned  
Ship towns to pastures of otters. He  
In his slant, racking house  
And the hewn coils of his trade perceives  
Herons walk in their shroud,

The livelong river's robe  
Of minnows wreathing around their prayer;  
And far at sea he knows,  
Who slaves to his crouched, eternal end  
Under a serpent cloud,  
Dolphins dyive in their turnturtle dust,  
The rippled seals streak down  
To kill and their own tide daubing blood  
Slides good in the sleek mouth.

In a cavernous, swung  
Wave's silence, wept white angelus knells.  
Thirty-five bells sing struck  
On skull and scar where his lovews lie wrecked,  
Steered by the falling stars.  
And to-morrow weeps in a blind cage  
Terror will rage apart  
Before chains break to a hammer flame  
And love unbolts the dark

And freely he goes lost  
In the unknown, famous light of great

And fabulous, dear God.  
Dark is a way and light is a place,  
Heaven that never was  
Nor will be ever is always true,  
And, in that brambled void,  
Plenty as blackberries in the woods  
The dead grow for His joy.

There he might wander bare  
With the spirits of the horseshoe bay  
Or the stars' seashore dead,  
Marrow of eagles, the roots of whales  
And wishbones of wild geese,  
With blessed, unborn God and His Ghost,  
And every soul His priest,  
Gulled and chanter in young Heaven's fold  
Be at cloud quaking peace,

But dark is a long way.  
He, on the earth of the night, alone  
With all the living, prays,  
Who knows the rocketing wind will blow  
The bones out of the hills,  
And the scythed boulders bleed, and the last  
Rage shattered waters kick  
Masts and fishes to the still quick starts,  
Faithlessly unto Him

Who is the light of old  
And air shaped Heaven where souls grow wild  
As horses in the foam:  
Oh, let me midlife mourn by the shrined  
And druid herons' vows  
The voyage to ruin I must run,  
Dawn ships clouded aground,  
Yet, though I cry with tumbledown tongue,  
Count my blessings aloud:

Four elements and five  
Senses, and man a spirit in love  
Thangling through this spun slime  
To his nimbus bell cool kingdom come  
And the lost, moonshine domes,  
And the sea that hides his secret selves  
Deep in its black, base bones,  
Lulling of spheres in the seashell flesh,  
And this last blessing most,

That the closer I move  
To death, one man through his sundered hulks,  
The louder the sun blooms  
And the tusked, ramshackling sea exults;

And every wave of the way  
And gale I tackle, the whole world then,  
With more triumphant faith  
That ever was since the world was said,  
Spins its morning of praise,

I hear the bouncing hills  
Grow larked and greener at berry brown  
Fall and the dew larks sing  
Taller this thunderclap spring, and how  
More spanned with angles ride  
The mansouled fiery islands! Oh,  
Holier then their eyes,  
And my shining men no more alone  
As I sail out to die

Dylan Thomas

## Prologue

This day winding down now  
At God speeded summer's end  
In the torrent salmon sun,  
In my seashaken house  
On a breakneck of rocks  
Tangled with chirrup and fruit,  
Froth, flute, fin, and quill  
At a wood's dancing hoof,  
By scummed, starfish sands  
With their fishwife cross  
Gulls, pipers, cockles, and snails,  
Out there, crow black, men  
Tackled with clouds, who kneel  
To the sunset nets,  
Geese nearly in heaven, boys  
Stabbing, and herons, and shells  
That speak seven seas,  
Eternal waters away  
From the cities of nine  
Days' night whose towers will catch  
In the religious wind  
Like stalks of tall, dry straw,  
At poor peace I sing  
To you strangers (though song  
Is a burning and crested act,  
The fire of birds in  
The world's turning wood,  
For my swan, splay sounds),  
Out of these seathumbed leaves  
That will fly and fall  
Like leaves of trees and as soon  
Crumble and undie  
Into the dogdayed night.  
Seaward the salmon, sucked sun slips,  
And the dumb swans drub blue  
My dabbed bay's dusk, as I hack  
This rumpus of shapes  
For you to know  
How I, a spining man,  
Glory also this star, bird  
Roared, sea born, man torn, blood blest.  
Hark: I trumpet the place,  
From fish to jumping hill! Look:  
I build my bellowing ark  
To the best of my love  
As the flood begins,  
Out of the fountainhead  
Of fear, rage read, manalive,  
Molten and mountainous to stream  
Over the wound asleep  
Sheep white hollow farms

To Wales in my arms.  
Hoo, there, in castle keep,  
You king singsong owls, who moonbeam  
The flickering runs and dive  
The dingle furred deer dead!  
Huloo, on plumed bryns,  
O my ruffled ring dove  
in the hooting, nearly dark  
With Welsh and reverent rook,  
Coo rooning the woods' praise,  
who moons her blue notes from her nest  
Down to the curlew herd!  
Ho, hullaballoing clan  
Agape, with woe  
In your beaks, on the gabbing capes!  
Heigh, on horseback hill, jack  
Whisking hare! who  
Hears, there, this fox light, my flood ship's  
Clangour as I hew and smite  
(A clash of anvils for my  
Hubbub and fiddle, this tune  
On a toungued puffball)  
But animals thick as thieves  
On God's rough tumbling grounds  
(Hail to His beasthood!).  
Beasts who sleep good and thin,  
Hist, in hogback woods! The haystacked  
Hollow farms in a throng  
Of waters cluck and cling,  
And barnroofs cockcrow war!  
O kingdom of neighbors finned  
Felled and quilled, flash to my patch  
Work ark and the moonshine  
Drinking Noah of the bay,  
With pelt, and scale, and fleece:  
Only the drowned deep bells  
Of sheep and churches noise  
Poor peace as the sun sets  
And dark shoals every holy field.  
We will ride out alone then,  
Under the stars of Wales,  
Cry, multitudes of arks! Across  
The water lidded lands,  
Manned with their loves they'll move  
Like wooden islands, hill to hill.  
Hulloo, my prowed dove with a flute!  
Ahoy, old, sea-legged fox,  
Tom tit and Dai mouse!  
My ark sings in the sun  
At God speeded summer's end  
And the flood flowers now.



Dylan Thomas

## Should Lanterns Shine

Should lanterns shine, the holy face,  
Caught in an octagon of unaccustomed light,  
Would wither up, an any boy of love  
Look twice before he fell from grace.  
The features in their private dark  
Are formed of flesh, but let the false day come  
And from her lips the faded pigments fall,  
The mummy cloths expose an ancient breast.

I have been told to reason by the heart,  
But heart, like head, leads helplessly;  
I have been told to reason by the pulse,  
And, when it quickens, alter the actions' pace  
Till field and roof lie level and the same  
So fast I move defying time, the quiet gentleman  
Whose beard wags in Egyptian wind.

I have heard may years of telling,  
And many years should see some change.

The ball I threw while playing in the park  
Has not yet reached the ground.

Dylan Thomas

## **Sometimes the Sky's Too Bright**

Sometimes the sky's too bright,  
Or has too many clouds or birds,  
And far away's too sharp a sun  
To nourish thinking of him.  
Why is my hand too blunt  
To cut in front of me  
My horrid images for me,  
Of over-fruitful smiles,  
The weightless touching of the lip  
I wish to know  
I cannot lift, but can,  
The creature with the angel's face  
Who tells me hurt,  
And sees my body go  
Down into misery?  
No stopping. Put the smile  
Where tears have come to dry.  
The angel's hurt is left;  
His telling burns.

Sometimes a woman's heart has salt,  
Or too much blood;  
I tear her breast,  
And see the blood is mine,  
Flowing from her, but mine,  
And then I think  
Perhaps the sky's too bright;  
And watch my hand,  
But do not follow it,  
And feel the pain it gives,  
But do not ache.

Dylan Thomas

## **The Conversation of Prayer**

The conversation of prayers about to be said  
By the child going to bed and the man on the stairs  
Who climbs to his dying love in her high room,  
The one not caring to whom in his sleep he will move  
And the other full of tears that she will be dead,

Turns in the dark on the sound they know will arise  
Into the answering skies from the green ground,  
From the man on the stairs and the child by his bed.  
The sound about to be said in the two prayers  
For the sleep in a safe land and the love who dies

Will be the same grief flying. Whom shall they calm?  
Shall the child sleep unharmed or the man be crying?  
The conversation of prayers about to be said  
Turns on the quick and the dead, and the man on the stair  
To-night shall find no dying but alive and warm

In the fire of his care his love in the high room.  
And the child not caring to whom he climbs his prayer  
Shall drown in a grief as deep as his made grave,  
And mark the dark eyed wave, through the eyes of sleep,  
Dragging him up the stairs to one who lies dead.

Dylan Thomas

## **The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower**

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees  
Is my destroyer.  
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose  
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

The force that drives the water through the rocks  
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams  
Turns mine to wax.  
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins  
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

The hand that whirls the water in the pool  
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind  
Hauls my shroud sail.  
And I am dumb to tell the hanging man  
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.

The lips of time leech to the fountain head;  
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood  
Shall calm her sores.  
And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind  
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb  
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

Dylan Thomas

## **The Hand That Signed the Paper**

The hand that signed the paper felled a city;  
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,  
Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country;  
These five kings did a king to death.

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,  
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;  
A goose's quill has put an end to murder  
That put an end to talk.

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,  
And famine grew, and locusts came;  
Great is the hand that holds dominion over  
Man by a scribbled name.

The five kings count the dead but do not soften  
The crusted wound nor pat the brow;  
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;  
Hands have no tears to flow.

Dylan Thomas

## The Seed-At-Zero

The seed-at-zero shall not storm  
That town of ghosts, the trodden womb,  
With her rampart to his tapping,  
No god-in-hero tumble down  
Like a tower on the town  
Dumbly and divinely stumbling  
Over the manwaging line.

The seed-at-zero shall not storm  
That town of ghosts, the manwaged tomb  
With her rampart to his tapping,  
No god-in-hero tumble down  
Like a tower on the town  
Dumbly and divinely leaping  
Over the warbearing line.

Through the rampart of the sky  
Shall the star-flanked seed be riddled,  
Manna for the rumbling ground,  
Quickening for the riddled sea;  
Settled on a virgin stronghold  
He shall grapple with the guard  
And the keeper of the key.

May a humble village labour  
And a continent deny?  
A hemisphere may scold him  
And a green inch be his bearer;  
Let the hero seed find harbour,  
Seaports by a drunken shore  
Have their thirsty sailors hide him.

May be a humble planet labour  
And a continent deny?  
A village green may scold him  
And a high sphere be his bearer;  
Let the hero seed find harbour,  
Seaports by a thirsty shore  
Have their drunken sailors hide him.

Man-in-seed, in seed-at-zero,  
From the foreign fields of space,  
Shall not thunder on the town  
With a star-flanked garrison,  
Nor the cannons of his kingdom  
Shall the hero-in-tomorrow  
Range on the sky-scraping place.

Man-in-seed, in seed-at-zero,  
From the star-flanked fields of space,  
Thunders on the foreign town  
With a sand-bagged garrison,

Nor the cannons of his kingdom  
Shall the hero-in-to-morrow  
Range from the grave-groping place.

Dylan Thomas



## Then Was My Neophyte

Then was my neophyte,  
Child in white blood bent on its knees  
Under the bell of rocks,  
Ducked in the twelve, disciple seas  
The winder of the water-clocks  
Calls a green day and night.  
My sea hermaphrodite,  
Snail of man in His ship of fires  
That burn the bitten decks,  
Knew all His horrible desires  
The climber of the water sex  
Calls the green rock of light.

Who in these labyrinths,  
This tidethread and the lane of scales,  
Twine in a moon-blown shell,  
Escapes to the flat cities' sails  
Furled on the fishes' house and hell,  
Nor falls to His green myths?  
Stretch the salt photographs,  
The landscape grief, love in His oils  
Mirror from man to whale  
That the green child see like a grail  
Through veil and fin and fire and coil  
Time on the canvas paths.

He films my vanity.  
Shot in the wind, by tilted arcs,  
Over the water come  
Children from homes and children's parks  
Who speak on a finger and thumb,  
And the masked, headless boy.  
His reels and mystery  
The winder of the clockwise scene  
Wound like a ball of lakes  
Then threw on that tide-hoisted screen  
Love's image till my heartbone breaks  
By a dramatic sea.

Who kills my history?  
The year-hedged row is lame with flint,  
Blunt scythe and water blade.  
'Who could snap off the shapeless print  
From your to-morrow-treading shade  
With oracle for eye?'  
Time kills me terribly.  
'Time shall not murder you,' He said,  
'Nor the green nought be hurt;  
Who could hack out your unsucked heart,  
O green and unborn and undead?'  
I saw time murder me.

Dylan Thomas

## **There Was a Saviour**

There was a saviour  
Rarer than radium,  
Commoner than water, crueller than truth;  
Children kept from the sun  
Assembled at his tongue  
To hear the golden note turn in a groove,  
Prisoners of wishes locked their eyes  
In the jails and studies of his keyless smiles.

The voice of children says  
From a lost wilderness  
There was calm to be done in his safe unrest,  
When hindering man hurt  
Man, animal, or bird  
We hid our fears in that murdering breath,  
Silence, silence to do, when earth grew loud,  
In lairs and asylums of the tremendous shout.

There was glory to hear  
In the churches of his tears,  
Under his downy arm you sighed as he struck,  
O you who could not cry  
On to the ground when a man died  
Put a tear for joy in the unearthly flood  
And laid your cheek against a cloud-formed shell:  
Now in the dark there is only yourself and myself.

Two proud, blacked brothers cry,  
Winter-locked side by side,  
To this inhospitable hollow year,  
O we who could not stir  
One lean sigh when we heard  
Greed on man beating near and fire neighbour  
But wailed and nested in the sky-blue wall  
Now break a giant tear for the little known fall,

For the drooping of homes  
That did not nurse our bones,  
Brave deaths of only ones but never found,  
Now see, alone in us,  
Our own true strangers' dust  
Ride through the doors of our unentered house.  
Exiled in us we arouse the soft,  
Unclenched, armless, silk and rough love that breaks all rocks.

Dylan Thomas

## **This Side of the Truth**

(for Llewelyn)

This side of the truth,  
You may not see, my son,  
King of your blue eyes  
In the blinding country of youth,  
That all is undone,  
Under the unminding skies,  
Of innocence and guilt  
Before you move to make  
One gesture of the heart or head,  
Is gathered and spilt  
Into the winding dark  
Like the dust of the dead.

Good and bad, two ways  
Of moving about your death  
By the grinding sea,  
King of your heart in the blind days,  
Blow away like breath,  
Go crying through you and me  
And the souls of all men  
Into the innocent  
Dark, and the guilty dark, and good  
Death, and bad death, and then  
In the last element  
Fly like the stars' blood

Like the sun's tears,  
Like the moon's seed, rubbish  
And fire, the flying rant  
Of the sky, king of your six years.  
And the wicked wish,  
Down the beginning of plants  
And animals and birds,  
Water and Light, the earth and sky,  
Is cast before you move,  
And all your deeds and words,  
Each truth, each lie,  
Die in unjudging love.

Dylan Thomas

## **To-Day, This Insect**

To-day, this insect, and the world I breathe,  
Now that my symbols have outelbowed space,  
Time at the city spectacles, and half  
The dear, daft time I take to nudge the sentence,  
In trust and tale I have divided sense,  
Slapped down the guillotine, the blood-red double  
Of head and tail made witnesses to this  
Murder of Eden and green genesis.

The insect certain is the plague of fables.

This story's monster has a serpent caul,  
Blind in the coil scrams round the blazing outline,  
Measures his own length on the garden wall  
And breaks his shell in the last shocked beginning;  
A crocodile before the chrysalis,  
Before the fall from love the flying heartbone,  
Winged like a sabbath ass this children's piece  
Uncredited blows Jericho on Eden.

The insect fable is the certain promise.

Death: death of Hamlet and the nightmare madmen,  
An air-drawn windmill on a wooden horse,  
John's beast, Job's patience, and the fibs of vision,  
Greek in the Irish sea the ageless voice:  
'Adam I love, my madmen's love is endless,  
No tell-tale lover has an end more certain,  
All legends' sweethearts on a tree of stories,  
My cross of tales behind the fabulous curtain.'

Dylan Thomas

## Twenty Four Years

Twenty-four years remind the tears of my eyes.  
(Bury the dead for fear that they walk to the grave in labour.)  
In the groin of the natural doorway I crouched like a tailor  
Sewing a shroud for a journey  
By the light of the meat-eating sun.  
Dressed to die, the sensual strut begun,  
With my red veins full of money,  
In the final direction of the elementary town  
I advance as long as forever is.

Dylan Thomas

## **Twenty-Four Years**

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Dylan Thomas

## **Vision and Prayer**

Who  
Are you  
Who is born  
In the next room  
So loud to my own  
That I can hear the womb  
Opening and the dark run  
Over the ghost and the dropped son  
Behind the wall thin as a wren's bone?  
In the birth bloody room unknown  
To the burn and turn of time  
And the heart print of man  
Bows no baptism  
But dark alone  
Blessing on  
The wild  
Child.

Dylan Thomas



## Vision and Prayer [I]

Who  
Are you  
Who is born  
In the next room  
So loud to my own  
That I can hear the womb  
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Bows no baptism  
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Blessing on  
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Child.

Dylan Thomas

## **Was There a Time**

Was there a time when dancers with their fiddles  
In children's circuses could stay their troubles?  
There was a time they could cry over books,  
But time has sent its maggot on their track.  
Under the arc of the sky they are unsafe.  
What's never known is safest in this life.  
Under the skysigns they who have no arms  
have cleanest hands, and, as the heartless ghost  
Alone's unhurt, so the blind man sees best.

Dylan Thomas

## **When All My Five and Country Senses See**

When all my five and country senses see,  
The fingers will forget green thumbs and mark  
How, through the halfmoon's vegetable eye,  
Husk of young stars and handfull zodiac,  
Love in the frost is pared and wintered by,  
The whispering ears will watch love drummed away  
Down breeze and shell to a discordant beach,  
And, lashed to syllables, the lynx tongue cry  
That her fond wounds are mended bitterly.  
My nostrils see her breath burn like a bush.

My one and noble heart has witnesses  
In all love's countries, that will grope awake;  
And when blind sleep drops on the spying senses,  
The heart is sensual, though five eyes break.

Dylan Thomas

## When Once the Twilight Locks No Longer

When once the twilight locks no longer  
Locked in the long worm of my finger  
Nor damned the sea that sped about my fist,  
The mouth of time sucked, like a sponge,  
The milky acid on each hinge,  
And swallowed dry the waters of the breast.

When the galactic sea was sucked  
And all the dry seabed unlocked,  
I sent my creature scouting on the globe,  
That globe itself of hair and bone  
That, sewn to me by nerve and brain,  
Had stringed my flask of matter to his rib.

My fuses are timed to charge his heart,  
He blew like powder to the light  
And held a little sabbath with the sun,  
But when the stars, assuming shape,  
Drew in his eyes the straws of sleep  
He drowned his father's magics in a dream.

All issue armoured, of the grave,  
The redhaired cancer still alive,  
The cataracted eyes that filmed their cloth;  
Some dead undid their bushy jaws,  
And bags of blood let out their flies;  
He had by heart the Christ-cross-row of death.

Sleep navigates the tides of time;  
The dry Sargasso of the tomb  
Gives up its dead to such a working sea;  
And sleep rolls mute above the beds  
Where fishes' food is fed the shades  
Who periscope through flowers to the sky.

When once the twilight screws were turned,  
And mother milk was stiff as sand,  
I sent my own ambassador to light;  
By trick or chance he fell asleep  
And conjured up a carcass shape  
To rob me of my fluids in his heart.

Awake, my sleeper, to the sun,  
A worker in the morning town,  
And leave the poppied pickthank where he lies;  
The fences of the light are down,  
All but the brisker riders thrown  
And worlds hang on the trees.

Dylan Thomas

## When, Like a Running Grave

When, like a running grave, time tracks you down,  
Your calm and cuddled is a scythe of hairs,  
Love in her gear is slowly through the house,  
Up naked stairs, a turtle in a hearse,  
Hauled to the dome,

Comes, like a scissors stalking, tailor age,  
Deliver me who timid in my tribe,  
Of love am barer than Cadaver's trap  
Robbed of the foxy tongue, his footed tape  
Of the bone inch

Deliver me, my masters, head and heart,  
Heart of Cadaver's candle waxes thin,  
When blood, spade-handed, and the logic time  
Drive children up like bruises to the thumb,  
From maid and head,

For, sunday faced, with dusters in my glove,  
Chaste and the chaser, man with the cockshut eye,  
I, that time's jacket or the coat of ice  
May fail to fasten with a virgin o  
In the straight grave,

Stride through Cadaver's country in my force,  
My pickbrain masters morsing on the stone  
Despair of blood faith in the maiden's slime,  
Halt among eunuchs, and the nitric stain  
On fork and face.

Time is a foolish fancy, time and fool.  
No, no, you lover skull, descending hammer  
Descends, my masters, on the entered honour.  
You hero skull, Cadaver in the hangar  
Tells the stick, 'fail.'

Joy is no knocking nation, sir and madam,  
The cancer's fashion, or the summer feather  
Lit on the cuddled tree, the cross of fever,  
Not city tar and subway bored to foster  
Man through macadam.

I dump the waxlights in your tower dome.  
Joy is the knock of dust, Cadaver's shoot  
Of bud of Adam through his boxy shift,  
Love's twilit nation and the skull of state,  
Sir, is your doom.

Everything ends, the tower ending and,  
(Have with the house of wind), the leaning scene,  
Ball of the foot depending from the sun,  
(Give, summer, over), the cemented skin,

The actions' end.

All, men my madmen, the unwholesome wind  
With whistler's cough contages, time on track  
Shapes in a cinder death; love for his trick,  
Happy Cadaver's hunger as you take  
The kissproof world.

Dylan Thomas

## **Where Once the Waters of Your Face**

Where once the waters of your face  
Spun to my screws, your dry ghost blows,  
The dead turns up its eye;  
Where once the mermen through your ice  
Pushed up their hair, the dry wind steers  
Through salt and root and roe.

Where once your green knots sank their splice  
Into the tided cord, there goes  
The green unraveller,  
His scissors oiled, his knife hung loose  
To cut the channels at their source  
And lay the wet fruits low.

Invisible, your clocking tides  
Break on the lovebeds of the weeds;  
The weed of love's left dry;  
There round about your stones the shades  
Of children go who, from their voids,  
Cry to the dolphined sea.

Dry as a tomb, your coloured lids  
Shall not be latched while magic glides  
Sage on the earth and sky;  
There shall be corals in your beds  
There shall be serpents in your tides,  
Till all our sea-faiths die.

Dylan Thomas