

THOUGHTAUDIO



## THE MADMAN

HIS PARABLES AND POEMS

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Produced by ThoughtAudio.com

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## THE MADMAN

**Y**ou ask me how I became a madman. It happened in this way: One day, long before many gods were born, I woke from a deep sleep and found all my masks were stolen—the seven masks I have fashioned and worn in seven lives. I ran maskless through the crowded streets shouting, “Thieves, thieves, the cursed thieves.” Men and women laughed at me and some ran to their houses in fear of me.

When I reached the market place, a youth standing on a housetop cried, “He is a madman.” I looked up to behold him. For the first time the sun kissed my own naked face and my soul was inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more. As if in a trance I cried, “Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks.” In this way, I became a madman.

I have found both freedom of loneliness and the safety from being understood, for those who understand us enslave something in us. Let me not be too proud of my safety. Even a thief in a jail is not safe from another thief. In the ancient days, when the first quiver of speech came to my lips, I ascended the holy mountain and spoke to God, saying, “Master, I am your slave. Your hidden will is my law and I shall obey you forever more.” God made no answer, and like a mighty tempest passed away. After a thousand years, I ascended the holy mountain and again spoke to God, saying, “Creator, I am your creation. Out of clay you have fashioned me and to you I owe everything.” God made no answer, but like a thousand swift wings passed away. After a thousand years, I climbed the holy mountain and spoke to God again, saying, “Father, I am your son. In pity and love you have given me birth, and through love and worship I shall inherit your kingdom.” God made no answer and like the mist that veils the distant hills, he passed away. After a thousand years I climbed the sacred mountain and again spoke to God, saying, “My God, my aim and my fulfillment; I am your yesterday and you are my tomorrow. I am your root in the earth and you are my flower in the sky, and together we

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grow before the face of the sun.” Then God leaned over me and in my ears whispered words of sweetness, and even as the sea that enfolds a brook that runs down to her, he enfolded me. When I descended to the valleys, the plains God was also there. My friend, I am not what I seem. Seeming is but a garment I wear—a care-woven garment that protects me from your questionings and you from my negligence.

The “I” in me, my friend, dwells in the house of silence, and there it shall remain forever more, unperceived, unapproachable. I would not have you believe in what I say nor trust in what I do—for my words are nothing but your own thoughts in sound, and my deeds your own hopes in action. When you say, “The wind blows eastward,” I say, “Yes it does blow eastward“; for I would not have you know that my mind does not dwell upon the wind but upon the sea. You cannot understand my seafaring thoughts, nor would I have you understand. I would be at sea alone. When it is day with you, my friend, it is night with me; yet even then I speak of the noontide that dances upon the hills and of the purple shadow that steals its way across the valley; for you can not hear the songs of my darkness nor see my wings beating against the stars—and I am happy to not have you hear or see. I would be with night alone. When you ascend to your Heaven I descend to my Hell—even then you call to me across the unbridgeable gulf, “My companion, my comrade,” and I call back to you, “My comrade, my companion“—for I would not have you see my Hell. The flame would burn your eyesight and the smoke would crowd your nostrils. I love my Hell too well to have you visit it. I would be in Hell alone. You love Truth and Beauty and Righteousness; and I for your sake, say it is well and seemly to love these things. in my heart I laughed at your love. Yet, I would not have you see my laughter. I would laugh alone. My friend, you are good, cautious and wise; no, you are perfect—and I, too, speak with you wisely and cautiously. Yet I am mad. I mask my madness. I would be mad alone. My friend, you are not my friend, but how shall I make you understand? My path is not your path, yet together we walk, hand in hand.

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Once I said to a scarecrow, “You must be tired of standing in this lonely field.” He said, “The joy of scaring is a deep and lasting one, and I never tire of it.” Said I, after a minute of thought, “It is true; for I too have known that joy.” Said he, “Only those who are stuffed with straw can know it.” Then I left him, not knowing whether he had complimented or belittled me. A year passed, during which the scarecrow turned philosopher. when I passed by him again I saw two crows building a nest under his hat.

In the town where I was born lived a woman and her daughter, who walked in their sleep. One night, while silence enfolded the world, the woman and her daughter, walking, yet asleep, met in their mist-veiled garden. The mother spoke, and she said, “At last, at last, my enemy! You who destroyed my youth—who have built up your life upon the ruins of mine! If I could kill you!” The daughter spoke, and she said: “O hateful woman, selfish and old! Who stand between my freer self and me! Who would have my life be an echo of your own faded life! If you were dead!” At that moment, a cock crew and both women awoke. The mother said gently, “Is that you, darling?” The daughter answered gently, “Yes, dear.”

One day a wise dog passed by a company of cats. As he came near, he saw that they were very intent and did not heed him. At this indifference, he stopped immediately in his tracks. Then in the midst of the company, a large grave cat arose and looked upon them and said, “Brethren, begin to pray. When you have prayed again and yet again, doubting nothing, then it will certainly rain mice.” When the dog heard this he laughed in his heart and turned from them saying, “O blind and foolish cats, has it not been written, and this fact I know now and my and the same with my fathers before me, that that which rains for prayer, faith and supplication is not mice but bones.”

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Upon a lonely mountain, there lived two hermits who worshipped God and loved one another. Now these two hermits had one earthen bowl, and this was their only possession. One day an evil spirit entered into the heart of the older hermit and he came to the younger and said, "It is a long time that we have lived together. The time has come for us to part. Let us divide our possessions." Then the younger hermit was saddened and he said, "It grieves me, Brother that you should leave me. If you must go, so be it," and he brought the earthen bowl and gave it to him saying, "We cannot divide it, Brother, let it be yours." Then the older hermit said, "Charity I will not accept. I will take nothing but what is mine. It must be divided." The younger one said, "If the bowl be broken, of what use would it be to you or to me? If it pleases you, let us instead cast a lot." The older hermit said again, "I will have only justice and what is mine. I will not trust justice and what is mine to vain chance. The bowl must be divided."

Then the younger hermit could reason no further and he said, "If it is indeed your will, and even though I offer you the whole bowl and you refuse that, then let us break the bowl." The face of the older hermit grew exceedingly dark, and he cried, "O you cursed coward, you would not fight."

Once there lived a man who had a valley-full of needles. One day the mother of Jesus came to him and said, "Friend, my son's garment is torn and I must mend it before he goes to the temple. Would you not give me a needle?" He did not give her a needle, but he gave her a learned discourse on Giving and Taking to carry to her son before he should go to the temple.

In the stillest hour of the night, as I lay half asleep, my seven selves sat together and in this way conversed in whisper: First Self: Here, in this madman, I have dwelt all these years, with nothing to do but renew his pain by day and recreate his sorrow by night. I

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can bear my fate no longer, and now I rebel. Second Self: Yours is a better lot than mine brother, for it is given to me to be this madman's joyous self. I laugh his laughter and sing his happy hours, and with three winged feet, I dance his brighter thoughts. I would rebel against my weary existence. Third Self: what of me, the love-ridden self, the flaming brand of wild passion and fantastic desires? It is I, the lovesick self, who would rebel against this madman. Fourth Self: I, among you all, am the most miserable, for nothing was given me but odious hatred and destructive loathing. It is I, the tempest-like self, the one born in the black caves of Hell, who would protest against serving this madman. Fifth Self: No, it is I, the thinking self, the fanciful self, the self of hunger and thirst, the one doomed to wander without rest in search of unknown things and things not yet created; it is I, not you, who would rebel. Sixth Self: I, the working self, the pitiful laborer, who, with patient hands, and longing eyes, fashion the days into images and give the formless elements new and eternal forms—it is I, the solitary one, who would rebel against this restless madman. Seventh Self: How strange that you all would rebel against this man, because each and every one of you has a preordained fate to fulfill. If I could only be like one of you, a self with a determined lot! I have none, I am the do-nothing self, the one who sits in the dumb, empty nowhere and nowhen, while you are busy re-creating life. Is it you or I, neighbors, who should rebel?

When the seventh self in this way lamented the other six selves looked with pity upon him but said nothing more; and as the night grew deeper one after the other went to sleep enfolded with a new and happy submission. The seventh self remained watching and gazing at nothingness, which is behind all things.

One night a feast was held in the palace, and there came a man and prostrated himself before the prince, and all the feasters looked upon him; and they saw that one of his eyes was out and that the empty socket bled. the prince inquired of him, “What has happened

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to you?” The man replied, “O prince, I am by profession a thief, and this night, because there was no moon, I went to rob the money-changer's shop, and as I climbed in through the window I made a mistake and entered the weaver's shop, and in the dark I ran into the weaver's loom and my eye was plucked out. Now, O prince, I ask for justice upon the weaver.” Then the prince sent for the weaver and he came, and it was decreed that one of his eyes should be plucked out. “O prince,” said the weaver, “the decree is just. It is right that one of my eyes be taken. Yet, both are necessary to me in order that I may see the two sides of the cloth that I weave. I have a neighbor, a cobbler, who has also two eyes, and in his trade both eyes are not necessary.” Then the prince sent for the cobbler. He came. They took out one of the cobbler's two eyes. Justice was satisfied.

A fox looked at his shadow at sunrise and said, “I will have a camel for lunch today.” All morning he went about looking for camels. At noon, he saw his shadow again—and he said, “A mouse will do.”

A king once ruled in the distant city of Wirani who was both mighty and wise. He was feared for his might and loved for his wisdom. Now, in the heart of that city was a well, whose water was cool and crystalline, from which all the inhabitants drank, even the king and his courtiers; for there was no other well. One night when everyone was asleep, a witch entered the city, and poured seven drops of strange liquid into the well, and said, “From this hour he who drinks this water shall become mad.” The next morning all the inhabitants, except the king and his lord chamberlain, drank from the well and became mad, just as the witch had foretold. During that day, the people in the narrow streets and in the market places did nothing but whisper to one another, “The king is mad. Our king and his lord chamberlain have lost their reason.

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Surely we cannot be ruled by a mad king. We must dethrone him.” That evening the king ordered a golden goblet to be filled from the well. When it was brought to him, he drank deeply, and gave it to his lord chamberlain to drink. There was great rejoicing in that distant city of Wirani, because its king and its lord chamberlain had regained their reason.

Three men met at a tavern table. One was a weaver, another a carpenter and the third a ploughman. The weaver spoke, “I sold a fine linen shroud today for two pieces of gold. Let us have all the wine we want.” “I,” said the carpenter, “sold my best coffin. We will have a great roast with the wine.” “I only dug a grave,” said the ploughman, “but my patron paid me double. Let us have honey cakes too.” All that evening the tavern was busy, for they continually ordered portions of wine, meat and cakes. The whole part was merry. The host rubbed his hands and smiled at his wife for his guests were spending freely. When they left the moon was high, and they walked along the road singing and shouting together. The host and his wife stood in the tavern door and looked after them. “Ah!” said the wife, “these gentlemen! So openhanded and so free! If only they could bring us such luck every day! Then our son need not be a tavern-keeper and work so hard. We could educate him, and he could become a priest.”

Last night I invented a new pleasure, and as I was giving it the first trial, an angel and a devil came rushing toward my house. They met at my door and fought with each other over my newly created pleasure; the one crying, “It is a sin!”—the other, “It is a virtue!”

Three days after I was born, as I lay in my silken cradle, gazing with astonished dismay on the new world round about me, my mother spoke to the wet-nurse, saying, “How is my child doing?” The wet-nurse answered, “He is doing well well, Madame, I have fed him three times; and I have never before seen a babe so young yet so free.” I was indignant; and I cried, “It is not true, mother; for my bed is hard, and the milk I have



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sucked is bitter to my mouth, the odor of the breast is foul in my nostrils, and I am most miserable.” My mother did not understand, nor did the nurse; for the language I spoke was that of the world from which I came. On the twenty-first day of my life, as I was being christened, the priest said to my mother, “You should indeed be happy, Madame, that your son was born a Christian.”

I was surprised,—and I said to the priest, “Then your mother in Heaven should be unhappy, for you were not born a Christian.” The priest too did not understand my language. After seven moons, a soothsayer looked at me, and he said to my mother, “Your son will be a statesman and a great leader of men.” I cried out,—“That is a false prophet; for I shall be a musician, and nothing but a musician shall I be.” Even at that age my language was not understood—and great was my astonishment. After thirty-three years, during which my mother, and the nurse, and the priest have all died, (the shadow of God be upon their spirits) the soothsayer still lives. Yesterday I met him near the gates of the temple; and while we were talking together he said, “I have always known you would become a great musician. Even in your infancy I prophesied and foretold your future.” I believed him—for now, I too have forgotten the language of that other world.

Once when I was living in the heart of a pomegranate, I heard a seed saying, “Someday I shall become a tree, and the wind will sing in my branches, and the sun will dance on my leaves, and I shall be strong and beautiful through all the seasons.” Then another seed spoke and said, “When I was as young as you, I too held such views. Now that I can weigh and measure things, I see that my hopes were vain.” A third seed spoke, “I see in us nothing that promises so great a future.” a fourth said, “ what a mockery our life would be, without a greater future!” Said a fifth, “Why dispute what we shall be, when we do not even know what we are.” A sixth replied, “Whatever we are, that we shall continue to be.” A seventh said, “I have such a clear idea how everything will be, but I cannot put it

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into words.” Then an eight spoke—and a ninth—and a tenth—and then many—until all were speaking, and I could distinguish nothing for the many voices. So I moved that very day into the heart of a quince, where the seeds are few and almost silent.

In my father's garden, there are two cages. In one is a lion, which my father's slaves brought from the desert of Ninavah; in the other is a songless sparrow. Every day at dawn the sparrow calls to the lion, “Good day to you, brother prisoner.”

Three ants met on the nose of a man who was asleep in the sun. After they had saluted one another, each according to the custom of his tribe, they stood there conversing. The first ant said, “These hills and plains are the most barren I have known. I have searched all day for a grain of some sort, and there is none to be found.” The second ant said, “I too have found nothing, though I have visited every nook and glade. This is, I believe, what my people call the soft, moving land where nothing grows.” Then the third ant raised his head and said, “My friends, we are standing on the nose of the Supreme Ant, the mighty and infinite Ant, whose body is so great that we cannot see it, whose shadow is so vast that we cannot trace it, whose voice is so loud that we cannot hear it; and He is omnipresent.” When the third ant spoke this way the other ants looked at each other and laughed. At that moment, the man moved and in his sleep raised his hand and scratched his nose, and the three ants were crushed.

Once, as I was burying one of my dead selves, the grave-digger came by and said to me, “Of all those who come here to bury, you alone I like.” Said I, “You please me exceedingly but why do you like me?” “Because,” said he, “They come weeping and go weeping—you only come laughing and go laughing.”

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Yesterday, on the marble steps of the Temple, I saw a woman sitting between two men. One side of her face was pale, the other was blushing.

In my youth, my elders told me about a certain city where every one lived according to the Scriptures. After I became of age, I said, "I will seek that city and its blessedness." The blessed city was a far distance and so I prepared substantial provisions for my journey. After forty days, I arrived at the city and on the forty-first day, I entered into it. To my surprise, the whole company of the inhabitants had each but a single eye and but one hand. I was astonished and said to myself, "Why is it that the people of this great, holy city have only one eye and only one hand?" Then I noticed that they were also astonished at my presence. Then I began to realize they in turn were marveling at my two hands and my two eyes. As they were speaking together I inquired of them saying, "Is this indeed the Blessed City, where each man lives according to the Scriptures?" they said, "Yes, this is that city." "What," said I, "has befallen you, and where are your right eyes and your right hands?" all the people were moved.

They said, "Come you and see." they took me to the temple in the midst of the city. In the temple, I saw a heap of hands and eyes. They were all withered. Then I said, "What conqueror has committed this cruelty upon you?" there went a murmur among them. one of their elders stood forth and said, "We did this to ourselves. God has made us conquerors over the evil that was in us." he led me to a high altar, and all the people followed. He showed me above the altar an inscription graven, and I read: "If your right eye offend you, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that the whole body should be cast into hell. if your right hand offend you, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into hell." Then I understood. I turned about to all the people and cried, "Has no man or woman among you two eyes or two hands?" they answered me saying, "No, not one. There is

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none whole except such as are yet too young to read the Scripture and to understand its commandment.” when we had come out of the temple, I immediately left that Blessed City; for I was not too young, and I could read the scripture.

The Good God and the Evil God met on the mountaintop. The Good God said, “Good day to you, brother.” The Evil God did not answer. The Good God said, “You are in a bad humor today.” “Yes,” said the Evil God, “lately I have been often mistaken for you, called by your name, and treated as if I were you, and it displeases me.” the Good God said, “ I too have been mistaken for you and called by your name.” The Evil God walked away curing the stupidity of man.

Defeat, my Defeat, my solitude and my aloofness; you are dearer to me than a thousand triumphs, sweeter to my heart than all world-glory. Defeat, my Defeat, my self-knowledge and my defiance, through you I know that I am still young and swift of foot not to be trapped by withering laurels. In you, I have found aloneness the joy of being shunned and scorned. Defeat, my Defeat, my shining sword and shield, In your eyes I have read that to be enthroned is to be enslaved, and to be understood is to be leveled down, to be grasped is but to reach one's fullness and like a ripe fruit to fall and be consumed. Defeat, my Defeat, my bold companion, You shall hear my songs and my cries and my silences, none but you shall speak to me of the beating of wings, urging of seas, of mountains that burn in the night.

You alone shall climb my steep and rocky soul. Defeat, my Defeat, my deathless courage, you and I shall laugh together with the storm, together we shall dig graves for all that dies in us, we shall stand in the sun with a will, we shall be dangerous.

“I am like you, O, Night, dark and naked; I walk on the flaming path that is above my day-dreams, and whenever my foot touches earth a giant oak tree comes forth.” “No, you

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are not like me, O, Madman, for you still look backward to see how large a foot-print you leave on the sand.” “I am like you, O, Night, silent and deep; and in the heart of my loneliness lies a Goddess waiting to give birth to a child; and in him who is being born Heaven touches Hell.” “No, you are not like me, O, Madman, for you still shudder before pain, and the song of the abyss terrifies you.” “I am like you, O, Night, wild and terrible; for my ears are crowded with cries of conquered nations and sighs for forgotten lands.” “No, you are not like me, O, Madman, for you still take your little-self for a comrade, and with your monster-self you can not be friend.” “I am like you, O, Night, cruel and awful; for my bosom is lit by burning ships at sea and my lips are wet with blood of slain warriors.” “No, you are not like me, O, Madman; for the desire for a sister-spirit is still upon you, and you have not become a law to yourself.” “I am like you, O, Night, joyous and glad; for he who dwells in my shadow is now drunk with virgin wine and she who follows me is sinning joyfully.” “No, you are not like me, O, Madman, for your soul is wrapped in the veil of seven folds and you do not hold their heart in yours hand.” “I am like you, O, Night, patient and passionate; for in my breast a thousand dead lovers are buried in shrouds of withered kisses.” “Yes, Madman, are you like me? Are you like me? Can you ride the tempest as a steed, and grasp the lightning as a sword?” “Like you, O, Night, like you, mighty and high, my throne built upon heaps of fallen Gods. Before me pass the days to kiss the hem of my garment but never to gaze at my face.” “Are you like me, child of my darkest heart? Do you think my untamed thoughts and speak my vast language?” “Yes, we are twin brothers, O, Night; for you reveal space and I reveal my soul.”

I have seen a face with a thousand countenances, and a face that was but a single countenance as if held in a mould. I have seen a face whose sheen I could look through to the ugliness beneath and a face whose sheen I had to lift to see how beautiful it was.

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I have seen an old face much lined with nothing, and a smooth face in which all things were graven. I know faces, because I look through the fabric my own eye weaves, and behold the reality beneath.

My soul and I went to the great sea to bathe. When we reached the shore, we went about looking for a hidden and lonely place. as we walked, we saw a man sitting on a grey rock taking pinches of salt from a bag and throwing them into the sea. “This is the pessimist,” said my soul, “Let us leave this place. We cannot bathe here.” We walked on until we reached an inlet. There we saw, standing on a white rock, a man holding a jewelry box, from which he took sugar and threw it into the sea. “This is the optimist,” said my soul, “he too must not see our naked bodies. Further on we walked. on a beach we saw a man picking up dead fish and tenderly putting them back into the water. “We cannot bathe before him,” said my soul. “He is the humane philanthropist.” we passed on. Then we came where we saw a man tracing his shadow on the sand. Great waves came and erased it. he went on tracing it again and again. “He is the mystic,” said my soul, “Let us leave him.” we walked on, until in a quiet cover we saw a man scooping up the foam and putting it into an alabaster bowl. “He is the idealist,” said my soul, “Surely he must not see our nudity.” on we walked. Suddenly we heard a voice crying, “This is the sea. This is the deep sea. This is the vast and mighty sea.” when we reached the voice it was a man whose back was turned to the sea, and at his ear he held a shell, listening to its murmur. my soul said, “Let us pass on. He is the realist, who turns his back on the whole that he cannot grasp, and busies himself with a fragment.” Therefore, we passed on. In a weedy place among the rocks was a man with his head buried in the sand. I said to my soul, “We can bath here, for he cannot see us.” “No,” said my soul, “For he is the most deadly of them all. He is the puritan.” Then a great sadness came over the face of my soul, and into her voice. “Let us go,” she said, “For there is no lonely, hidden place where we can bathe.

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I would not have this wind lift my golden hair, or bare my white bosom in this air, or let the light disclose my sacred nakedness.” Then we left that sea to seek the Greater Sea.

I cried to men, “I should be crucified!” They said, “Why should your blood be upon our heads?” I answered, “How else shall you be exalted except by crucifying madmen?” they heeded and I was crucified. the crucifixion appeased me. When I was hanged between earth and heaven, they lifted up their heads to see me.

They were exalted, for their heads had never before been lifted. as they stood looking up at me one called out, “What is it that you seek to atone?” another cried, “In what cause do you sacrifice yourself?” a third said, “Do you think that with this price you will buy world glory?” Then said a fourth, “Behold, look at how he smiles! Can such pain be forgiven?” I answered them all, and said: “Remember only that I smiled. I do not atone—nor sacrifice—nor wish for glory; and I have nothing to forgive. I thirsted—and I asked you to give me my blood to drink. For what is there that can quench a madman's thirst but his own blood? I was dumb—and I asked you to wound me for mouths. I was imprisoned in your days and nights—and I sought a door into larger days and nights. Now I go—as others already crucified have gone. Do not think we are weary of crucifixion? For we must be crucified by larger and yet larger men, between greater earths and greater heavens.”

In the shadow of the temple, my friend and I saw a blind man sitting alone. my friend said, “Behold the wisest man of our land.” Then I left my friend and approached the blind man and greeted him. we conversed. After a while I said, “Forgive my question; but since when have you been blind?” “From my birth,” he answered. Said I, “what path of wisdom follows you?” Said he, “I am an astronomer.” Then he placed his hand upon his breast saying, “I watch all these suns and moons and stars.”

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Here I sit between my brother the mountain and my sister the sea. We three are one in loneliness, and the love that binds us together is deep and strong and strange. No, it is deeper than my sister's depth and stronger than my brother's strength, and stranger than the strangeness of my madness. Aeons upon aeons have passed since the first grey dawn made us visible to one another; and though we have seen the birth and the fullness and the death of many worlds, we are still eager and young. We are young and eager and yet we are mateless and unvisited, and though we lie in unbroken half embrace, we are un comforted. what comfort is there for controlled desire and unspent passion? When shall the flaming god come to warm my sister's bed? what she-torrent shall quench my brother's fire? who is the woman that shall command my heart? In the stillness of the night, my sister murmurs in her sleep the fire-god's unknown name, and my brother calls afar upon the cool and distant goddess. I do not know who I call in my sleep. I sit here between my brother the mountain and my sister the sea.

We three are one in loneliness, and the love that binds us together is deep, strong and mysterious.

A blade of grass said to an autumn leaf, "You make such a noise when you fall! You scatter all my winter dreams." The leaf answered indignantly, "Low-born and low-dwelling! Songless, peevish thing! You do not live in the upper air and therefore you cannot recognize the sound of singing." Then the autumn leaf lay down upon the earth and slept. When spring came she awoke again—and she was a blade of grass. when it was autumn and her winter sleep was upon her, and above her through all the air the leaves were falling, she muttered to herself, "O these autumn leaves! They make such noise! They scatter all my winter dreams."

Said the Eye one day, "I see beyond these valleys a mountain veiled with blue mist. Is it not beautiful?" The Ear listened, and after listening intently awhile, said, "where is any



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mountain? I do not hear it.” Then the Hand spoke and said, “I am trying in vain to feel it or touch it, and I can find no mountain.” the Nose said, “There is no mountain, I cannot smell it.” Then the Eye turned the other way, and they all began to talk together about the Eye's strange delusion. they said, “Something must be the matter with the Eye.”

Once there lived in the ancient city of Afkar two learned men who hated and belittled each other's learning. For one of them denied the existence of the gods and the other was a believer. One day the two met in the marketplace, and amidst their followers they began to dispute and to argue about the existence or the non-existence of the gods. after hours of contention they parted. That evening the unbeliever went to the temple and prostrated himself before the altar and prayed the gods to forgive his wayward past. the same hour the other learned man, he who had upheld the gods, burned his sacred books. For he had become an unbeliever.

When my Sorrow was born I nursed it with care, and watched over it with loving tenderness. My Sorrow grew like all living things, strong and beautiful and full of wondrous delights. We loved one another, my Sorrow and I, and we loved the world about us; for Sorrow had a kindly heart and mine was kindly with Sorrow.

When we conversed, my Sorrow and I, our days were winged and our nights were girdled with dreams; for Sorrow had an eloquent tongue, and mine was eloquent with Sorrow.

When we sang together, my Sorrow and I, our neighbors sat at their windows and listened; for our songs were deep as the sea and our melodies were full of strange memories. When we walked together, my Sorrow and I, people gazed at us with gentle eyes and whispered in words of exceeding sweetness. There were those who looked upon us with envy, for Sorrow was a noble thing and I was proud with Sorrow. My Sorrow died, like all living things, and alone I am left to muse and ponder. now when I speak my words fall heavily upon my ears. When I sing my songs, my neighbors do not come to

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listen. when I walk the streets no one looks at me. Only in my sleep I hear voices saying in pity, “See, there lies the man whose Sorrow is dead.” when my Joy was born, I held it in my arms and stood on the house-top shouting, “Come you, my neighbors, come and see, for Joy is born is born to me today. Come and behold this gladsome thing that laughs in the Sun.” None of my neighbors came to look upon my Joy, and great was my astonishment. Every day for seven moons, I proclaimed my Joy from the housetop—and yet no one heeded me. My Joy and I were alone, unsought and unvisited. Then my Joy grew pale and weary because no other heart but mine held its loveliness and no other lips kissed its lips. Then my Joy died of isolation. Now I only remember my dead Joy in remembering my dead Sorrow.

Memory is an autumn leaf that murmurs a while in the wind and then is heard no more. God of lost souls, you who are lost among the gods, hear me: Gentle Destiny that watches over us, mad, wandering spirits, hear me: I dwell in the midst of a perfect race, I the most imperfect. I, a human chaos, a nebula of confused elements, I move among finished worlds—peoples of complete laws and pure order, whose thoughts are assorted, whose dreams are arranged, and whose visions are enrolled and registered. Their virtues, O God, are measured, their sins are weighed and even the countless things that pass in the dim twilight of neither sin nor virtue are recorded and catalogued. Here days and night are divided into seasons of conduct and governed by rules of blameless accuracy. To eat, to drink, to sleep, to cover one's nudity, and then to be weary in due time. To work, to play, to sing, to dance, and then to lie still when the clock strikes the hour. To think in this way, to feel in this way much, and then to cease thinking and feeling when a certain star rises above the distant horizon.

To rob a neighbor with a smile, to bestow gifts with a graceful wave of the hand, to praise prudently, to blame cautiously, to destroy a sound with a word, to burn a body with a breath, and then to wash the hands when the day's work is done. To love according to an

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established order, to entertain one's best self in a preconceived manner, to worship the gods becomingly, to intrigue the devils artfully—and then to forget all as though memory were dead. To fancy with a motive, to contemplate with consideration, to be happy sweetly, to suffer nobly—and then to empty the cup so that tomorrow may fill it again. All these things, O God, are conceived with forethought, born with determination, nursed with exactness, governed by rules, directed by reason, and then slain and buried after a prescribed method. Even their silent graves that lie within the human soul are marked and numbered. It is a perfect world, a world of consummate excellence, a world of supreme wonders, the ripest fruit in God's garden, the master-thought of the universe.

Why should I be here, O God, I a green seed of unfulfilled passion, a mad tempest that seeks neither east nor west, a bewildered fragment from a burnt planet? Why am I here, O God of lost souls, you who are lost among the gods?

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**THE END**