

THE AUTUMN WOODS

THE eye of Fate is closed; the olden doom
Lies in the wrack of things. There is no sigh;
Only the wind cries through the lonely woods,
And the barren motherhood of the world is manifest
Shamelessly; in the dank, pale Autumn woods
The fallen leaves lie squelching under the feet
Of the desolate gnomes; and now the birds are silent,
And the streams flow sluggishly through the veins of the world.
Dark gray and cloudy, the skies no more are blue,
And grayness reigning solitary makes music
Drearly through the wind-harp. The dripping rain
Soddens the earth, and the stones lie thick and wet
Among the leaves; and the trees wave naked arms
In despair to the sky. The light is quickly dying,
And there is no more day; the dull red sun—
A sore and aching eye in a face of gray—
Droops down to slumber. All the world is dead.

Rose! Rose! Where art thou? O my Rose, my Rose!
My secret Rose, art lost among the gray?
There is no voice in the silence; in the woods
The brownness glistens under the weeping rain,
And I am in despair of Thee and Time.
Weeping the trees, and all the streams grown sullen
Under the lowering skies, and the bitter winds.
There is no living thing in the temple of Summer,
And the ashes of Spring lie cold on the hearth of day.

Gray dreams again! And all my hope is fled.
Gray dreams, gray dreams, and the day is tired and dead.
The bitter aftermath of Summer brings
Time's memory back to the world: there are no stings,
In the world's pain, but only bitterness
Of the memory of Time; no sore distress,

Save for the thought of Summer waned and dead,
And faded with the gold skies overhead,
And the young green beneath; ah! secret Rose,
Here in the heart of the woods I pluck thee forth,
Fraught with the swell of Summer, crimson-bright!
And for the world under the stars to-night—
It shall be thine, and thine the star that draws
The world to worship thee: the days are fled
Under the heavens; there is no more sun,
And no more love; the world is hushed and dead.

Slim-passing dryad through the lonely woods!
I will follow thee in the paths of dank decay;
Decadent Autumn, with thy lonely broods
Of active gnomes, and little red-capped Fays,
Feasting in the Summer dead under the trees
Dripping with Autumn rains—ah! take me too,
Me too into the silence of the past,
The grave of desolation! I am weary
Of all things; let me sleep my life away!

The breast of Fate is pregnant with despair
Got on her by the piercing shaft of Time.
Ah! Unborn child of Fate and Time, I am weary
Of them that gave thee birth. Shall I love thee?
O darling, wilt thou come to me in the silence,
Saying: I hear the mystery of Time,
And the secret of Fate? I know not yet, but surely
Thou shalt know of the Rose, the rose, the Rose of the world;
With thee shall I bear the chalice of blood-tipped lilies,
The chalice of red, sweet lilies under the moon?

But now there is no moon, nor any sun;
The world's gray noon only is for thee and me;
There is no sound in the nerveless silences
Of the fading world; there is a quiver of light
On the river of life; we are unwed, my Rose,

Nor knoweth each the other; we are undone,
My Rose, my secret Rose, my unknown Rose!

And still the Autumn woods are rustling dumbly
With sodden leaves made brown by wind and rain;
And the satyrs are fled under the earth to hide
From the sunless world, and the nymphs are faded to air,
To be reborn in the sun-light: there is no more joy,
For mournfulness is fallen on the world,
And decadence and decay and the odour of eld.

The spirit sleeps; the Rose of the world is buried
Under the soil of every star that glows,
A hanging lamp, under the firmament.
There shall be no more roses, no more roses,
Until the spring of the stars shall fall on the world.
Then shall be light again, O secret Rose,
And thou shalt be born anew, with radiant star-light
For dew, and all thy petals shall be dreams
Crystallised of the gods who swing the chains
Of the worlds in space; and at the heart of thee
Shall be the secret knowledge, the sacred word,
The logos of the throbbing universe.

And the years shall pass in myriads over the tree
Whereon thou bloomest, O my Rose of the worlds!
And one shall pluck thee forth, and love and death
Shall lie together, and there shall be born
He who shall bear for ever into life
The rose-tipped lilies under the silent stars,
The silent stars, and the red-blushing roses.
O Rose, my Rose of the world, my Rose of Roses,
Thou shalt be born anew, and live for ever!

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