

The Dream

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Night had dawned, and the moon was high,
A silver wheel in a dark blue sky.

All the winds had told their tale,
All the stars were bright and pale.

A line of sea-foam curled and leapt,
And thought was hushed, and daylight slept.

"Watchman, what of the night?" men said,
"And how of the hours that speed and have sped?"

I said, "It is well, for the night is deep
Over your heads: go back to sleep.

"Lo! it is well, for the white stars gleam
Over your heads: go back and dream.

They, answering, smiled, "It is well, yet say,
With lyre and voice, when it shall be day."

So I strayed alone by the hungry sea,
And the night grew deeper, and covered me.

And I lay alone on the earth, and soon
I slept a deep sleep in the night's high noon.

All the winds were blent and stilled,
All my dream with song was filled.

And all the stars shone rosily
Over a darkened, sleepless sea,

And in my dream I rose, and peered
Over the sea, where a little boat steered.

Over the waves it came to me,
With a golden light that illumed the sea.

And one leapt out whose eyes were day-fair,
Who symbolized Night in his floating hair.

He took my hand in his own, and said,
"Brother, how long hast thou been dead?"

I gazed on him for awhile and said,
"Brother, how sayest thou I am dead?"

He turned and pointed, and lo! there lay
Behind me my body, . . . and then it was day.

I said, "Never now shall I tell of day,
For my voice is lost, and my body clay."

I said, "It is over: not now for me
To summon men to the brightening sea."

He answered, " 'Tis well. Come hence with me:
Were it not well to cross the sea?"

But my hand grew stiff in his, and I said,
"Brother, O brother! I am not dead?"

He led me on to the edge of the sea,
Saying, "Brother, wilt thou not go with me?"

Another sunrise shall welcome thee:
Wilt thou not, then, come over the sea?"

I turned, and men were drawing sharp breath
Over my body. They saw not Death.

I snatched my hand from Death, and said,
"O my brothers! I am not dead!"

But still they paid no heed to me;
They shaded their eyes, looking over the sea.

Said Death, "How shalt thou know Death and fear?
Am I not Death? And am I not here?"

And then Death went to the boat with me,
But men still gazed eagerly over the sea.

Death touched my hand . . . and the dream was o'er;
I went, with my lyre, back, back from the shore.

I summoned men, and my notes rang true,
And the sunlight flashed on a sea of blue.

And I sang to the throng, and I cast out fears,
For the words of Death rang still in my ears.

I sang, "It is well! and lo! there glows
Morn over the sea, and a dawn-breeze blows."

I shook my hair in the sunlight: then
I tuned my lyre to the ears of men.

And with merry laughter and sobbing breath
I sang of the night, and my dream of Death.

A white half-heard note came to me,
And wove itself deep in my minstrelsy.

From the blazing east the sun rose high—
A golden wheel in a golden sky.