

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Hermann Hesse**

**- poems -**

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## **A Swarm Of Gnats**

Many thousand glittering motes  
Crowd forward greedily together  
In trembling circles.  
Extravagantly carousing away  
For a whole hour rapidly vanishing,  
They rave, delirious, a shrill whir,  
Shivering with joy against death.  
While kingdoms, sunk into ruin,  
Whose thrones, heavy with gold, instantly scattered  
Into night and legend, without leaving a trace,  
Have never known so fierce a dancing.

Translated by James Wright

Submitted by Holt

Hermann Hesse

## **At Night On The High Seas**

At night, when the sea cradles me  
And the pale star gleam  
Lies down on its broad waves,  
Then I free myself wholly  
From all activity and all the love  
And stand silent and breathe purely,  
Alone, alone cradled by the sea  
That lies there, cold and silent, with a thousand lights.  
Then I have to think of my friends  
And my gaze sinks into their gazes  
And I ask each one, silent, alone:  
"Are you still mine"  
Is my sorrow a sorrow to you, my death a death?  
Do you feel from my love, my grief,  
Just a breath, just an echo?"  
And the sea peacefully gazes back, silent,  
And smiles: no.  
And no greeting and now answer comes from anywhere.

Translated by James Wright

Submitted by Holt

Hermann Hesse

## **How Heavy The Days**

How heavy the days are.  
There's not a fire that can warm me,  
Not a sun to laugh with me,  
Everything bare,  
Everything cold and merciless,  
And even the beloved, clear  
Stars look desolately down,  
Since I learned in my heart that  
Love can die.

Translated by James Wright

Submitted by Holt

Hermann Hesse

## **I Know, You Walk--**

I walk so often, late, along the streets,  
Lower my gaze, and hurry, full of dread,  
Suddenly, silently, you still might rise  
And I would have to gaze on all your grief  
With my own eyes,  
While you demand your happiness, that's dead.  
I know, you walk beyond me, every night,  
With a coy footfall, in a wretched dress  
And walk for money, looking miserable!  
Your shoes gather God knows what ugly mess,  
The wind plays in your hair with lewd delight---  
You walk, and walk, and find no home at all.

Translated by James Wright

Submitted by Holt

Hermann Hesse

## **Lonesome Night**

You brothers, who are mine,  
Poor people, near and far,  
Longing for every star,  
Dream of relief from pain,  
You, stumbling dumb  
At night, as pale stars break,  
Lift your thin hands for some  
Hope, and suffer, and wake,  
Poor muddling commonplace,  
You sailors who must live  
Unstarred by hopelessness,  
We share a single face.  
Give me my welcome back.

Translated by James Wright

Submitted by Holt

Hermann Hesse

## **Lying In Grass**

Is this everything now, the quick delusions of flowers,  
And the down colors of the bright summer meadow,  
The soft blue spread of heaven, the bees' song,  
Is this everything only a god's  
Groaning dream,  
The cry of unconscious powers for deliverance?  
The distant line of the mountain,  
That beautifully and courageously rests in the blue,  
Is this too only a convulsion,  
Only the wild strain of fermenting nature,  
Only grief, only agony, only meaningless fumbling,  
Never resting, never a blessed movement?  
No! Leave me alone, you impure dream  
Of the world in suffering!  
The dance of tiny insects cradles you in an evening radiance,  
The bird's cry cradles you,  
A breath of wind cools my forehead  
With consolation.  
Leave me alone, you unendurably old human grief!  
Let it all be pain.  
Let it all be suffering, let it be wretched-  
But not this one sweet hour in the summer,  
And not the fragrance of the red clover,  
And not the deep tender pleasure  
In my soul.

Translated by James Wright

Submitted by Holt

Hermann Hesse

## **On A Journey**

Don't be downcast, soon the night will come,  
When we can see the cool moon laughing in secret  
Over the faint countryside,  
And we rest, hand in hand.

Don't be downcast, the time will soon come  
When we can have rest. Our small crosses will stand  
On the bright edge of the road together,  
And rain fall, and snow fall,  
And the winds come and go.

Translated by James Wright

Submitted by Holt

Hermann Hesse



## **The Poet**

Hermann Hesse

## Thinking Of A Friend At Night

In this evil year, autumn comes early...  
I walk by night in the field, alone, the rain clatters,  
The wind on my hat...And you? And you, my friend?

You are standing--maybe--and seeing the sickle moon  
Move in a small arc over the forests  
And bivouac fire, red in the black valley.  
You are lying--maybe--in a straw field and sleeping  
And dew falls cold on your forehead and battle jacket.

It's possible tonight you're on horseback,  
The farthest outpost, peering along, with a gun in your fist,  
Smiling, whispering, to your exhausted horse.  
Maybe--I keep imagining--you are spending the night  
As a guest in a strange castle with a park  
And writing a letter by candlelight, and tapping  
On the piano keys by the window,  
Groping for a sound...

--And maybe  
You are already silent, already dead, and the day  
Will shine no longer into your beloved  
Serious eyes, and your beloved brown hand hangs wilted,  
And your white forehead split open--Oh, if only,  
If only, just once, that last day, I had shown you, told you  
Something of my love, that was too timid to speak!

But you know me, you know...and, smiling, you nod  
Tonight in front of your strange castle,  
And you nod to your horse in the drenched forest,  
And you nod to your sleep to your harsh clutter of straw,  
And think about me, and smile.  
And maybe,  
Maybe some day you will come back from the war,  
and take a walk with me some evening,  
And somebody will talk about Longwy, Luttich, Dammerkirch,  
And smile gravely, and everything will be as before,  
And no one will speak a word of his worry,  
Of his worry and tenderness by night in the field,  
Of his love. And with a single joke  
You will frighten away the worry, the war, the uneasy nights,  
The summer lightning of shy human friendship,  
Into the cool past that will never come back.

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Submitted by Holt

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## **Without You**

My Pillow gazes upon me at night  
Empty as a gravestone;  
I never thought it would be so bitter  
To be alone,  
Not to lie down asleep in your hair.

I lie alone in a silent house,  
The hanging lamp darkened,  
And gently stretch out my hands  
To gather in yours,  
And softly press my warm mouth  
Toward you, and kiss myself, exhausted and weak-  
Then suddenly I'm awake  
And all around me the cold night grows still.  
The star in the window shines clearly-  
Where is your blond hair,  
Where your sweet mouth?

Now I drink pain in every delight  
And poison in every wine;  
I never knew it would be so bitter  
To be alone,  
Alone, without you.

Translated by James Wright

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