The Works of Stefan George

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Now there is no deed I do not spurn!
To imagine talk between us two
And to let my senses conjure you,
To receive and serve, to have and yearn,
For nothing else, for this alone I burn
And weep because the visions which assail
In exultant darkness always pale
When the clear and cold of dawn return.

I am throttled by my hopes and fears,
Every word is lengthened into sighs.
So tempestuously my longings rise
That I slight the thought of sleep and rest,
That my couch is drenched with tears.
I reject the hint of happiness,
Beg my friends to leave me comfortless.

If I do not touch your body now
Then the fibre of my soul will tear
Like a bow-string over-strait.
Mourning is the colour dear to me
Who, since I am yours, know agony.
Slake and cool my hot and fevered brow,
Judge if I must suffer such despair,
I, who tremble at your gate?

Our delights are stern and spare.
What availed so brief a kiss?
Like a drop of rain was this
On a plain which, parched and bare,
Drinks but cannot quench its pain,
Cannot taste a second bliss,
And is cracked with heat again.
Beside the lovely flower-bed I lean,
Where haws with black and crimson thorn are hedged
Around tall cups with dappled spurs, and fledged
With velvet wings the bracken arches. Green
As water, flaky clusters curl their tips,
And in the middle bells! The grain of snow!
The liquid fragrance clinging to their lips
Is sweet as fruit from paradisian bough.

When behind the flowered gate our own
Breath at longed-for last, was all that stirred,
Did we feel that fancied ecstasy?
I remember how when softly one
Touched the other, we began to sway
Like the fragile reeds — without a word.
Tears rose in your eyes and had their way.
Very long like this you stayed with me.

When flung on heavy mats in holy rest,
Our tender hands around our temples curve,
And awe abates the burning of our limbs,
Then do not fear the formless shadows pressed
Against the wall in high and nether swerve,
The guards who can divide us at a nod,
The sand that traps the town in glaring rims
And is athirst to suck our tepid blood.

Against a silver willow on the shore
Your leaned, and with your fan you framed your hair,
The pointed slats in flashes seemed to flare,
As if in play you twirled the gems you wore.
And in a boat the leafen arches hide,
I wait. In vain I coaxed you down to me,
I see the willows bending lower, see
The scattered blossoms drifting with the tide.