

# Ode to a Nightingale

BY JOHN KEATS

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
    My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
    One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
    But being too happy in thine happiness,—  
    That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees  
        In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
        Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
    Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
    Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
    Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
    With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
        And purple-stained mouth;  
    That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
    What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
    Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
    Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
    Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
        And leaden-eyed despairs,  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
    Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
    Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
    Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:  
Already with thee! tender is the night,  
    And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
        Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
        But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
    Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

# Ode on a Grecian Urn

BY JOHN KEATS

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
    Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
    A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
    Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
    In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
    What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
    Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
    Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
    Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
    Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;  
    She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
    For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

# La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad

BY JOHN KEATS

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
Alone and palely loitering?  
The sedge has withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
So haggard and so woe-begone?  
The squirrel's granary is full,  
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,  
With anguish moist and fever-dew,  
And on thy cheeks a fading rose  
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,  
Full beautiful—a faery's child,  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.



I made a garland for her head,  
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;  
She looked at me as she did love,  
And made sweet moan

I set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long,  
For sidelong would she bend, and sing  
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild, and manna-dew,  
And sure in language strange she said—  
'I love thee true'.

She took me to her Elfin grot,  
And there she wept and sighed full sore,  
And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep,  
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—  
The latest dream I ever dreamt  
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
They cried—‘La Belle Dame sans Merci  
Thee hath in thrall!’

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,  
With horrid warning gapèd wide,  
And I awoke and found me here,  
On the cold hill’s side.

And this is why I sojourn here,  
Alone and palely loitering,  
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

# Bright Star

BY JOHN KEATS

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—  
    Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night  
And watching, with eternal lids apart,  
    Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,  
The moving waters at their priestlike task  
    Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,  
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask  
    Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—  
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,  
    Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
    Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.