

Mist and Rain

O ends of autumn, winters,
springtimes drenched with mud,
Seasons that lull to sleep!
I love you, I praise you
For enfolding my heart and mind thus
In a misty shroud and a filmy tomb.



On that vast plain where the cold south
wind plays, Where in the long, dark
nights the weather-cock grows hoarse,
My soul spreads wide its raven wings
More easily than in the warm springtide.

Nothing is sweeter to a gloomy heart
On which the hoar-frost has long been
falling, Than the permanent aspect of
your pale shadows,

O wan seasons, queens of our clime
— Unless it be to deaden suffering,
side by side. In a casual bed, on a
moonless night.

My Former Life

For a long time I dwelt under vast
porticos. Which the ocean suns lit with a
thousand colors, The pillars of which,
tall, straight, and majestic, Made them,
in the evening, like basaltic grottos.

The billows which cradled the image of
the sky. Mingled, in a solemn, mystical
way, The omnipotent chords of their rich
harmonies. With the sunsets' colors
reflected in my eyes;



It was there that I lived in voluptuous calm,
In splendor, between the azure and the sea,
And I was attended by slaves, naked,
perfumed,

Who fanned my brow with fronds of palms
And whose sole task it was to fathom
The dolorous secret that made me pine
away.



The Grateful Dead

In a rich, heavy soil, infested with
snails, I wish to dig my own grave,
wide and deep, Where I can at
leisure stretch out my old bones.
And sleep in oblivion like a shark in the
wave.

I have a hatred for testaments and for
tombs; Rather than implore a tear of the
world, I'd sooner, while alive, invite the
crows. To drain the blood from my filthy
carcass.

O worms! black companions with neither eyes
nor ears, See a dead being, joyous and free,
approaching you; Wanton philosophers,
children of putrescence,

Go through my ruin then, without remorse,
And tell me if there still remains any torture
for this old soulless body, dead among the
dead!

The Vampire

You who, like the stab of a knife,
Entered my plaintive heart;
You who, strong as a herd
Of demons, came, ardent and adorned,

The doorways of my sense unlatched
To make my spirit thy domain —
Harlot to whom I am attached
As convicts to the ball and chain,

As gamblers to the wheel's bright spell,
As drunkards to their raging thirst,
As corpses to their worms — accurst
Be thou! Oh, be thou damned to hell!

I have entreated the swift sword
To strike, that I at once be freed;
The poisoned phial I have implored
To plot with me a ruthless deed.

Alas! the phial and the blade
Do cry aloud and laugh at me:
"Thou art not worthy of our aid;
Thou art not worthy to be free.

"Though one of us should be the tool
To save thee from thy wretched fate,
Thy kisses would resuscitate
The body of thy vampire, fool!"



POEMS BY CHARLES BAUDELAIRE (1821 – 1867)
LES FLEURS DU MAL (FLOWERS OF EVIL)

TRANSLATED TO ENGLISH FROM FRENCH