

The Spring After

By Aleister Crowley

North, by the ice-belt, where the cliffs appease
Innumerable clamour of Sundering seas,
And garlands of ungatherable foam
Wild as the horses maddening toward home,
Where through the thunderous burden of the thaw
Rings the sharp fury of the breaking flaw,
Where summer's hand is heavy on the snow,
And springtide bursts the insuperable floe,
North, by the limit of the ocean, stands
A castle, lord of those far footless lands
That are the wall of that most monstrous world
About whose pillars Behemoth is curled,
About whose gates Leviathan is strong,
Whose secret terror sweetens not for song.
The hoarse loud roar of gulphs of raging brine
That break in foam and fire on that divine
Cliff-base, is smothered in the misty air,
And no sound penetrates them, save a rare
Music of sombre motion, swaying slow.
The sky above is one dark indigo
Voiceless and deep, no light is hard within
To shame love's lips and rouse the silky skin
From its dull olive to a perfect white.
For scarce an hour the golden rim of light
Tinges the southward bergs; for scarce an hour
The sun puts forth his seasonable flower,
And only for a little while the wind
Wakes at his coming, and beats cold and blind
On the wild sea that struggles to release
The hard grip from its throat, and lie at ease
Lapped in the eternal summer. But its waves
Roam through the solitude of empty caves
In vain, no faster wheels the moon above,
And still reluctant fly the hours of love.
It is so peaceful in the castle: here
The night of winter never froze a tear
On my love's cheek or mine; no sorrow came
To track our vessel by its wake of flame
Wherein the dolphin bathed his shining side;
No smallest cloud between me and my bride

Came like a little mist; one tender fear,
Too sweet to speak of, closed the dying year
With love more perfect, for its purple root
Might blossom outward to the snowy fruit
Whose bloom to-night lay sleeping on her breast,
As if a touch might stir the sunny nest,
Break the spell's power, and bid the spirit fly
Who had come near to dwell with us. But I
Bend through long hours above the dear twin life,
Look from love's guerdon to the lover-wife,
And back again to that small face so sweet,
And downwards to the little rosy feet,
And see myself no longer in her eyes
So perfectly as here, where passion lies
Buried and re-arisen and complete.
O happy life too sweet, too perfect sweet,
O happy love too perfectly made one
Not to arouse the envy of the sun
Who sulks six months for spite of it! O love,
Too pure and fond for those pale gods above,
Too perfect for their iron rods to break,
Arise, awake, and die for death's own sake
That one forgetfulness may take us three,
Still three, still one, to the Lethean sea,
That all its waters may be sweet as those
We wandered by, sweet sisters of the rose,
That perfect night before we fled, we two
Who were so silent down that avenue
Grown golden with the moonlight, who should be
No longer two, but one; nor one, but three.
And now it is the spring, the ice is breaking,
The waters roar, the winds their wings are shaking
To sweep upon the northland; we shall sail
Under the summer perfume of the gale
To some old valley where the altars steam
Before the gods, and where the maidens dream
Their little lives away, and where the trees
Shake laughing tresses at the rising breeze,
And where the wells of water lie profound,
And not unfrequent is the silver sound
Of shepherds tuneful as the leaves are green,
Whose reedy music echoes, clear and clean,
From rocky palaces where gnomes delight
To sport all springtime, where the brooding night
With cataract is musical, and thrushes
Throb their young love beside the stream that rushes

Headlong to beat its foamheads into snow,
Where the sad swallow calls, and pale songs flow
To match the music of the nightingale.
There, when the pulses of the summer fail,
The fiery flakes of autumn fall, and there
Some warm perfection of the lazy air
Swims through the purpling veins of lovers. Hark!
A faint bird's note, as if a silver spark
Struck from a diamond; listen, wife, and know
How perfectly I love to watch you so.
Wake, lover, wake, but stir not yet the child:
Wake, and thy brow serene and low and mild
Shall take my kisses, and my lips shall seek
The pallid roses on thy perfect cheek,
And kiss them into poppies, and thy mouth
Shall lastly close to mine, as in the south
We see the sun close fast upon the sea;
So, my own heart, thy mouth must close on me.
Art thou awake? Those eyes of wondering love,
Sweet as the dawn and softer than the dove,
Seek no quick vision—yet they move to me
And, slowly, to the child. How still are we!
Yes, and a smile betokens that they wake
Or dream a waking dream for kisses' sake;
Yes, I will touch thee, O my low sweet brow!
My wife, thy lips to mine—yes, kiss me now!