

A Wish Each

Come, sisters, around the inferno we shall dance
Let the wild song of the fire keep us entranced
And like our ancient mothers taught us
In a circle around the blaze we prance

I feel it, my sisters, the air is a-quiver
Drop into the pyre this still red liver
Of unicorn slain in all its innocence
So that the Beyond can to us our lost Prince deliver

Behold, the cauldron in the middle is turning green
Bring the virgin who has just turned eighteen
And pluck her head from her figure so pure
And dip it into the potion pristine

Dance again, my sisters, around we go
Stir the pot, and see it glow
'Tis not long before we shall have our beau
For look above and witness the flying crow

Now we must slice our hands
And watch the chemistry of the glands
Give birth to our creation
The achievement of our plans

(From the cauldron rises a dark cloud
Of a man to whom the witches have avowed
All their loyalty and all their love
And he in turn their way slowly bowed)

Prince: "Speak, my ladies, I grant you each
One favour that of me you may beseech
But remember this, my beauties (they were not beauties)
You cannot reverse the wish once seized."

"With you, my oldest sister, I shall begin
Perhaps you wish to rid yourself of saggy skin
Or perchance a new lover whose body spirit
You may want to once again suck bone thin?"

First Witch: "You are right, my Prince, oh clever one
For it is the ravages of time I want undone
Make me young as I once was
To slay another man once he gives me a son."

"I will make my son in your vein
And then never need a man again
For my son shall keep me satisfied
With his love and vigour unrestrained."

Prince: "I grant you your asking, my evil sister
Now off with you and your plans sinister
Take heed, however, and note that your son
Will despise the killer of his old mister."

Second Witch: "My Prince, my love, make me rich
I want to buy fabric of the highest stitch
I want to live in gluttony
And want my life to be without hitch."

"For money will neither cheat nor leave
However my mood and disposition may be
And I shall pay the most handsome man
To lay with me and further my breed."

Prince: "You are sinful, my sister, and I grant your desire
Of money you shall never tire
As long as you have means to make more
Or soon it will burn out like this fire."

Third Witch: "My Prince, my Lord, I am but your slave
But what I ask will make you shake
Send me to my grave
Make me without magic and my memory of this life please erase."

"I wish no longer to slay innocent beings
I wish no longer to sleep with dreams
I desire to sleep forever
And lie under the bed of a spring stream."

Prince: "My sister, you are the youngest of the three
And my most hardened devotee
From you I expected something dark
But with this desire you have truly surprised me."

"It is not easy to give up life
Because to come into this ugly and daily strife
From the other world where I rule
Souls are in competition rife."

"Those who make it across
Can not bear their life's loss
And instead try to prolong
Their ongoing miserable farce."

"But you, in your youth, desire to be forgotten
And buried and by the feet of multitudes trodden
Surely, you can think of something else
I allow you to reconsider this wish most sodden."

Third Witch: "My Prince, for years I have danced around fires such as this
And conjured spirits from the abyss
I have birthed demons in my young age
And have let them eat me through my cuisse."

"I was born a girl, but was snatched by the night
And did quickly grow accustomed to my plight
I partook in rituals and sacrifices made to You
But now in me there is no more that infantile fright."

"Too many nights I have spent singing and making merry
Too many nights drinking the sweet sherry
But now I think and in this world I feel trapped
Like a magnificent owl in an aviary."

"My Prince, I desire release, to fly away
Turn me into the earth, into wet clay
And let the elements mould me to their will
My hunger for death, please, you must allay."

Prince: "My wisest sister, with your mind made, and of death not afraid
I shall do one better than what I was bade
And turn back time for you, before all this darkness engulfed your life
Back to the girl playing with her blond braid."

Shah Jahan's Lament to Aurangzeb

Oh Alamgir, my son, you mighty Mughal
Conqueror of the World
What have you done
To my Empire, my pearl
Destroyed my legacy in a manner most shameful

From the start, I knew that it was power that you loved
The lessons I arranged, you were quickly bored of
The arts, the sciences pleased you naught
Only war games and chess your attention caught

Your bravery is for the legends
"Bahadur" I called you for slaying the elephant
Who found himself in the gardens on accident
It was not your brothers on you exacting revenge

And now in this my prison I perish
Across the Yamuna from the beloved I cherish
My favoured daughter nurses my wounds
While you march on your brothers with your murderous platoons

First, my eldest, your own brother, the rightful heir
You did slay in battle unfair
Then he with whose help you murdered the first
You betrayed and executed in a manner coerced

The last remaining you chased to distant mountains
Where he was tried and executed by your military captains
And finally, for all the kingdom's wealth
Imprisoned your own father in poor health

Here, in this sickly room, for my being has polluted the air
I see the moon settle over my Taj most fair
My childhood sweetheart lies buried there
While in her memory these eight years I have despaired

I spent the youth of my time serenading beauty
And in its passing, felt it my heart's duty
To honour the splendour that would shame the moon
A face like my darling's would have made Alexander swoon

With my loneliness I did contend
While 20,000 men
For two and twenty years did toil
To assuage my desire royal

On her body I did put too much burden
With issuance of children
Until at last she could bear no more
The fourteenth child for me she bore

Coast to coast your name is heard
Against your tyranny none dare utter a word
For you destroy kingdoms and expect tribute
Sikhs and Hindus alike you execute

The people of this land do now look on us
As invaders and not kings as custom once was
When my father the noble Jahangir was Sultan
Now this part of the world fears Islam

I await to be taken to my final resting place
Next to your mother in all her grace
From whence we came, we shall go
You too son, will one day this truth know

I've heard that the lands you command
Have never in history been under one hand
Your power stretches until the Silk Route
You command even the mighty warriors of Rajput

But just as each day must give in to night
Another will rise superior to your might
But when you are laid to rest, my King
No nightingale shall at your demise sing

Love will endure, as will my Mahal
While your soul will rot in Hell
My darling was proof that magic exists
Mumtaz, my Sultanate's Empress

Who Dunit?

William was a professor of mathematics
No mean feat by any means
He was also a handsome man
Lady lucky favoured him it seems
A sharp mind allowed him to rise fast
And he used his wit to charm the dean
So it was a surprise to all
When his body, limp, was in the grounds seen

William had been murdered
Strangled to death, per the autopsy
But what could this young man have done
To upset somebody to this degree
A bachelor who was admired by his students
He was a lad among lads, our poor Willy
He was also an excellent sailor
Leading the sailing team to victory
And during the many dances the school held
He would gladly dance with the girls of the bourgeoisie
In rugby he had no peer
Having played through matches with a wretched knee
Then who could want this gentleman dead
Really, I ask you, who could it be?

Our first suspect is of course John
The cricket team captain
Oh how he loathed William
His blood curled when he heard the name
Because John had failed in maths
And when the season came
Found himself barred from cricket
And thought William to blame
But truthfully, it was John's father
Who felt disgusted by this shame
And advised the school to "fix his boy"
Or they wouldn't get his donation again

We should also include in our suspicion
Matthew, the brilliant young prodigy
Who ached for Claire, the beauty who, in
William's presence, lost all modesty
And openly showered her professor with looks
That would make you and I think of sodomy
This girl wanted in mathematics
The same "grades" she had gotten in biology
And chemistry and physics, her only failure being in English poetry
Because it was taught by a woman
Nevertheless, there too Claire tried her sick perverted psychology

And of course, if you love a flower,
You must accept its thorns
But young Matthew was proud
And revenge on William he had sworn
Not knowing that it was his beloved
Who was causing his state so forlorn
Who now, seeing her dead professor
Was in a genuine state of mourn
Alas, the death of William had actually
Left the young girl torn
And Matthew lost forever his chance
For poor Claire will never recover from this emotional storm

We have one last suspect with motive to kill
It is Sean, the physics professor
Who eyed the position of the dean
Which was earmarked for our departed teacher
Sean lived a happy life but suffered from an enlarged ego
And seeing his colleague's success made him stir
He was envious of the humility of the "lads' favourite prof"
Who asked his students not to call him "Sir"
"That idiot," Sean would say, gripping his whiskey hard
And of course we know with alcohol how your thoughts are blurred
So every night, in his house with his wife,
Sean would scream in words slurred
How he was here longer and deserved to be dean
And not, as he called him, "William the Conqueror"

Let's now examine the scene of the crime
Poor lad, with his eyes open wide
And his neck sore where the scoundrel grabbed him
You could see from his clenched fists that he put up a fight
But on closer inspection, you would find not two but three sets of feet
Two walking in unison, no doubt of those who killed and then took flight
The third belonging to William
A life snuffed in its prime, a terrible sight
His blazer is still buttoned and his lapel still has the badge his fiancée gave him
That poor girl, she's there with the police, brave as a lion, having not once cried
She keeps looking back
And what's that?! Did we just see her smile?!
Wait a minute, I think there's treachery involved
She's smiling as a femme fatale might

Yes, it was her who had William killed
Her brothers, the two farmhands, did her dirty deed
It is rumoured that on campus she liked the younger boys
And William had found her many times wrestling with young men in their sheets

Why would a rising star like William
Fall for such a woman obscene
Even though she never stopped her adultery
And was always with various lads seen
Maybe he was mad too for loving her as he did
And cared not for his reputation as future dean
And hoped that one day she would change
A young man is always wont to dream

Insomnie

Be gone, this instant, you vile person
From this my dream in slumber deep.
For while you are here, I toss and turn
My brow sweating onto my sheet.

Why must you haunt me with images so dark
Of a child undead, with moth bitten eyes.
It scares me so, even though be it a farce
But you render it so real, with its terrifying cries.

It is you I talk to, my mind's imagination;
You are the vile ghost I speak to.
Why must you examine my patience?
I am of weak disposition and imagine my nightmares to be true.

Hauntingly close to reality you can be
For you know I have lost my child
To great misfortune and a deadly malady
And with my loss I have yet not reconciled.

So why this dreaded sequence do you play
And make me relive the horror of death?
Leave me alone, oh figureless ghost, to you I pray!
Leave me be and find someplace else your twisted mirth.

No concoction stirred by the fanciest mind
Seems to assuage my nightly hell.
A child's loss is unparalleled in its kind.
A greater sorrow it is not to hear one's own knell.

Were it that it be me for whom the Reaper came and I would gladly let him in,
It would be far lighter a burden;
To sacrifice my life so that a new one without sin
Could prosper and enjoy his own apple in His garden.

I cannot bear the nightly terror's showing
And then crawling into my bed as if my maiden.
Stop, Devil! Be you not content with what you have stolen?
Now for my sanity you come craving?

The days are sombre and blurred, with my heart roaring like the mighty seas
Drowning all reason, with the swell wreaking havoc.
Leave for me this my only respite, the night's sweet release.
Into nothingness let me escape and build my bivouac.

Go on, find another haunting
My life is troubling enough to see me to my days' end.
Return though, for it shan't be long before you'll hear me calling.
And then with you I shall depart hand in hand.

The General's Parting Words

Men, our enemy is near
To enslave us they have dared
The alarms have been sounded
And our objective crystal clear
We shall defend this sacred land of our ancestors dear
And protect from the enemy our maidens fair
With whatever we have, sword, shield or spear
We are no spineless yellow cowards, we have no fear
We shall not back down and show the enemy our rear
We shall stand guard with indeed our chests bare
And our steely eyed stare
And slay not one, but our foemen in pair
But nay, we are ready to die as well,
And therefore into the depths of gloom we glare
For we are men whose stories our countrymen will share
When they rejoice the victory we deliver
With fine wine and freshly brewed beer
And when they tell stories that we shall never hear
Know this, most noble men, you will not be buried in coffins
But in my damned heart over here