

Christina Rossetti
(1830-1894)

Sister Maude

Who told me mother of my shame,
Who told my father of my dear?
Oh who but Maude, my sister Maude,
Who lurked to spy and peer.
Cold he lies, as cold as stone,
With clotted curls about his face:
The comeliest corpse in all the world
And worthy of a queen's embrace.

You might have spared your soul, sister,
Have spared my soul, your own soul too:
Though I had not been born at all,
He'd never have looked at you.

My father may sleep in Paradise,
My mother at Heaven-gate:
But sister Maude shall get no sleep
either early or late.

My father may wear a golden crown,
My mother a crown might win;
If my dear and I knocked at Heaven-gate
Perhaps they'd let us in:
But sister Maude, oh sister Maude,
Bide you with death and sin.

Echo.

Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks
and eyes as bright
as sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

Oh dream, how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimful of love abide and meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes,
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet, come to me in dreams, that I may live
My very life again tho' cold in death:
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
Speak low, lean low,
How long ago, my love, how long ago.

Daughter of Eve

A fool I was to sleep at noon,
And wake when night is chilly
Beneath the comfortless cold moon;
A fool to pluck my rose too soon,
A fool to snap my lily.

My garden-plot I have not kept;
Faded and all-forsaken,
I weep as I have never wept:
Oh it was summer when I slept,
It's winter now, I waken.

Talk what you will of future Spring
and sun-warmed sweet tomorrow:
Stripped bare of hope and everything,
No more to laugh no more to sing,
I sit alone with sorrow.

Song.

Oh what comes over the sea,
Shoals and quicksands past;
And what comes home to me,
Sailing slow, sailing fast?

A wind comes over the sea
With a moan in its blast;
But nothing come home to me,
Sailing slow, sailing fast.

Let me be, let me be,
For my lot is cast:
Land or sea all's one to me,
And sail it slow or fast.