

Anola



and other poems by
Richard D. Gowin

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Richard Drury Gowin (1913 – 1986)

Richard Drury Gowin was born on October 28, 1913, in Washington DC, the only child of Vernor Gowin and Florence D. ("Flossie") Johnson. He grew up in Vienna, Virginia, where his father was a banker. He attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute for two years, then left school to marry, and lived in Washington with his first wife, Beulah Marie Showalter, daughter of Rev. E. T. Showalter. They had two children, a son and a daughter. This marriage ended in divorce in 1943.

During World War II, Richard Gowin served in the U.S. Navy as a radar technician on an "attack-cargo" ship. He received a medical discharge from the Navy in 1944 and married Dorothy Rands in Arlington, Virginia. They moved to Alaska in 1947 and operated a poultry farm in the town of Palmer. In 1951, they homesteaded on a 160-acre tract of land near the Lower Tonsina River. Four children were born in Alaska.

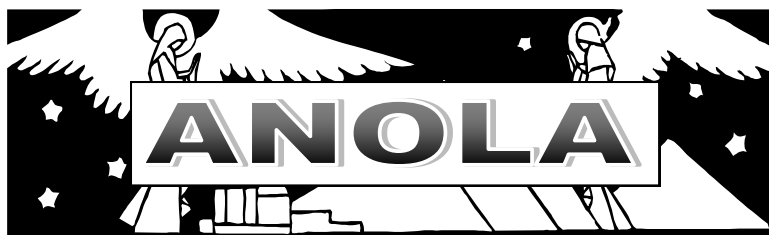
Richard and Dorothy Gowin were divorced in 1973, and he married Lu Fitzsimmons in Danbury, Connecticut. They moved to Naranja, Florida, where he pursued his hobbies of ocean sailing and amateur research in physics and electronics.

Richard Gowin died February 24, 1986, in Miami, Florida, of lung cancer. He was interred at the Palms Cemetery in Naranja, Florida.

The poetry in this collection was written during his youth in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This is its first publication.



Richard D. and Dorothy R. Gowin, 1947



Above a golden plain I flew
on scarlet wings that from me grew.
Below I saw my kind obtain
sweet nectar from the budding grain
And heard them chanting in glorious refrain.

The wings of all I saw so bright
in gleaming gold and spotless white.
Their robes of scarlet and of blue
shimmered in waves of light that blew
From 'cross the plain, whence no one ever knew.

In joy they dance from bud to bud,
their voices soft, a singing flood.
A few flit away to fairy glade
to there recline in peaceful shade
And continue to love, life's serenade.

And there in pretty, shady glade
I found Anola, fairy maid.
With eyes alight and spirits gay
she took my hand and danced away,
whispered love words and kissed my cheek in play.

From ever since all time began,
e'en farther back than mind can span,
Where time is veiled in misty white—
constantly in each other's sight
Anola and I abode in sweet delight.

There was a spot, quite free from grass,
hard as a rock, as smooth as glass,
A barren place in world so nice,
a flaw in the face of paradise.
Fairies who drew too near all paid the price.

The price was what we never knew.
Into the bare place, gone from view,
Never again to be heard or seen—
gone forever from happy green
And our paradise's beautiful scene.

With one accord we shunned the spot,
till while dancing by I forgot—
Anola cried, but 'twas too late:
I'd stepped within and met my fate
Despite the startled warning of my mate.

The last I saw, Anola's face
was lit up with fright and grace;
Her eyes threw me a farewell kiss
and then I slipped on down through this
Bottomless seam of space, the great abyss.

On through blackest night I hurled
and soon I saw another world.
'Twas filled with creatures fierce and dread—
I shuddered as the ground ran red
And living creatures on the dying fed.

I slipped into darkness again,
happy to pass the world where pain
Did reign in awful, fierce despair,
where beings from their fellows did tear
The bloody flesh that was their daily fare.

A new world flashed into view—
a frozen world of icy hue,
Where gleaming lights on mountains flash—
where icy pinnacles would dash
Against each other in hard, silent clash.

On through infinity now I race,
the light of worlds, the night of space—
And still my thoughts return again
to love, and my Anola's plane
Where fairies chant in glorious refrain.

After aeons of swiftest flight
the planet Earth hove into sight—
And then some force in mocking mirth
took my spirit in human birth—
Of father and mother I came to Earth.

Mother looked into my eyes
of angel blue like Heaven's skies
And said to father who stood by,
"The innocence within his eye
He must have brought with him from Heaven on high."

As I grew older year by year
upon this new tempestuous sphere,
Memories turned like dreams to mist.
Yet at times I hopelessly wist,
For memories of Anola still persist.

Perhaps Anola followed me
into the bare spot and space's sea—
Perhaps she too is on this plane—
I search the world time and again;
I look in every face, but all in vain.

I'm bound to Earth in hopeless mesh
of inescapable human flesh.
Oh, Anola, may death come to free
this troubled spirit that is me
To search the universe all o'er for thee.





I ask the question, What am I?
A shaken head is my reply—
Then what I'm not I'll try to tell,
Thus what I am to tell quite well.

I can not be what's pain to me,
And cannot be those things I see
Being destroyed or being arranged—
I am, and cannot be changed.

I cannot be this body mine,
For it changes in its design
And every seven years the trace
Of every cell has been replaced.

Then can it be I am my brain?
No, it changes time and again;
It is made of the food I eat,
Merely part of my body complete.

Oh, then am I my thoughts so bold?
If so, where am I when rolled
Among my blankets, sound asleep?
I have no thoughts right then to keep.

Mind or memories I can't be,
Nor eye, thoughts, brain, or knee—
So it seems that I am nothing—
Yet I am, so I am something.

Now I've heard some people profess
That in truth they a soul possess.
I am but a part of the whole—
I have a body; I AM A SOUL.





Down in the valley, down on my knees,
Praying to God who dwells above,
So full of pity and full of love,
Praying to God, give my heart ease.
Upon a spark of hope I seize
And I raise my arms high above
To the Spirit so like a dove—
But cold silence makes my heart freeze.

I looked to Heaven, begging for aid:
“Oh God,” I cried with tortured soul—
“Oh God,” the jeering echoes roll.
Down on the cold, damp sod I laid
And hurt the air with the sobs I made,
With none to help, none to console,
Tortured emotions took their toll,
To fade away as all things fade.

A preacher came of a great creed—
“Of course the Lord can’t hear you pray
until your sins are washed away.
‘Tis faith and baptism you need,
And here’s a book for you to read
That will tell all,” I heard him say
In flaming words of rich array
For ease to hearts—ah, yes, a creed.

I read the preacher's little book.
Of but one theme it seemed to tell,
And that the horrors of the hell
Where God (the preacher's god) will cook
All those who have the creed forsook—
Of all the cries of those who fell
And pains of them that dared rebel.
For ease to hearts I burned the book.

To nature I, and there I found—
No, not a creed, but God, and rest.
Ah Nature, where each leaf is blest
As whispers of the breeze resound—
Where joyous loves of birds abound
In springtime as they build their nest.
Ah, Nature, take me in Thy breast—
For Thou art God, and Thee I've found.





What one in all the world can know despair,
The very awfulness that heart strings bear,
When torn asunder for a love divine
And plunged in pain as deep and dark as mine?

What one of all the earthbound beings know
The torturing and cruel hell below
That slowly rasps the soul's most tender spot
Until that core becomes a spreading rot?

To whom but I does every thought bring dread,
A fearful dread that time's most steady tread
Can not ease, nor hope of coming death
Abate the ghastly pain of every breath?

There is not one that's felt the hideous strain
That makes the soul cry out for death in vain,
Then tells the soul that nothing e'er can save
It from its misery's hand, not e'en the grave.

My heart it begs but for some tears to weep;
The demons fondle it when't tries to sleep;
The slimy hands of hell take it and shake
With their hands so foul, when't lies awake.

So who in all this world can know despair,
Those awful depths that drown out every prayer
And bathe the soul in green and slimy brine —
So who on Earth can know despair like mine?



TO THE SPARKS OF LIGHT

The shimmering, glimmering sparks of light
Cast from the emery of my soul—
They may some tinder soon ignite
And burn their words against the scroll
That guides the stars throughout the night.

They may be lost in dust of fleeing time,
That falls so thick upon the gold
Of greater works than my poor rhyme;
But when the worlds and sun unfold,
Out from the ruins those gleams will climb.

These sparks of light, this very soul of mine,
Will some day slowly upward trudge
Unto that golden holy shrine
Where reigns my God, my King, my Judge.
And then ten fold these sparks will shine.

Are now but sparks, but then a flame will be,
A leaping throbbing crimson blaze,
A flame of love for all to see;
A flame with which my God to praise;
These sparks are His that lit in me.





A prisoner I, behind the walls of fate,
Bound by the mighty chains of circumstance;
I throw myself against the steel-bound gate,
Yet to escape there's not the slightest chance.

A captive I within the web of life;
Each struggle binds me tighter than before,
And nothing but the blade of death's keen knife
Can free my heart, when life's hot passion's o'er.

Despair and truth are both outside the walls,
Each strugglin' in to cut my strainin' bond -
To each of them my deathless hope now calls;
The end's not yet, the end that lies beyond.

And if despair should free my strugglin' frame,
It would become a wand'rin' vagabond
And roam the universe without an aim
Until the end, the end that lies beyond.

But if truth were to cut the barrier through,
Release the mighty irons of pure despond,
And paint my prisoned life a brighter hue,
I'd never fear the end that lies beyond.

A prisoner I, behind the walls of fate,
Both held and cramped by firmest darkness bond.
The truth will come, and 'twill not be too late,
Before the end, the end that lies beyond.





The story sad of forgotten lad
I'll sing to you tonight;
A lad who gave his life so brave
Without a thought of fright.

The people said the life he led
Throughout those years of yore
Made him so bad they would be glad
When death struck Allen Moore.

The River Gang whose terror rang
From mountains to the shore,
Whose fearless raid made men afraid,
Was led by Allen Moore.

A posse great with hearts of hate
Hunted the gang one day;
And that was when one hundred men
Sought but eight boys to slay.

Before this wave they sought the cave
Wherein they made their stand;
A hundred men stood in the glen
And feared the river's sand.

Before their lead the posse fled
And hid among the trees,
'Till hunger'd drive those that survive
From shelter on their knees.

The boys had food and were imbued
With courage that would fight;
They held the cave with manner brave
And laughed at sherrifs might.

The posse made a fuse of braid
And put it in a shell;
They lit the fuse with harsh abuse
To blow the lads to hell.

The shell they threw right in the cave;
They boys they saw it fall;
Their death was near but 'twas not fear
That tempered their farewell call.

In any creed no braver deed
Was ever done before
Than that one deed done with such speed
By faithful Allen Moore.

He gave a jest and with his chest
He carried the smold'ring shell;
His all he gave within the cave
To save his pals from hell.

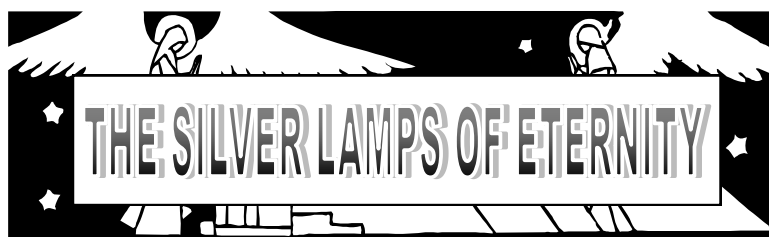
A hole was blown through flesh and bone,
And blew his life away;
The posse came to see their shame
And the remaining slay.

But for to save our Allen gave
His body, soul, and brain;
We swore and meant the lead we sent
To prove he died not vain.

For hell I ask if there I'll bask
In brimstone evermore,
To once more stand and grasp the hand
Of faithful Allen Moore.

Where e'er men speak of deeds unique
And of brave deeds of yore,
Their thoughts will dwell and words will tell
The death of Allen Moore.





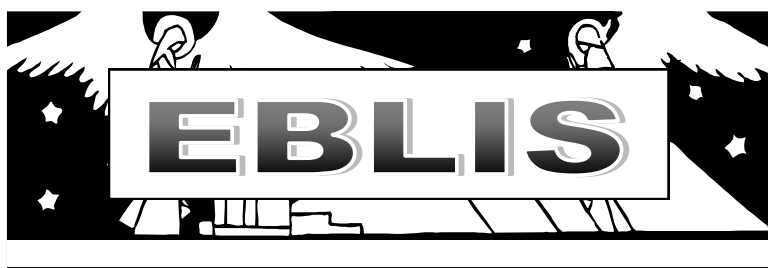
In deepest Pun-ja-pud I found
Beside a sorcerer's grave
A silver lamp that burns forever
Hidden in a cave.

The flame was a shining mirror,
A mirror of the soul.
I looked within and saw my heart
Depicted as a whole.

The gruesome blackness that I saw,
Tempered with bloody red,
Still ruins my every dream with fear
And echoes in my head.

So if to Pun-ja-pud you go
And find a sorcerer's grave,
Avoid Eternity's silver lamp,
Hidden in a cave.





A figure queer is roaming near,
A phantom of the night;
With eerie sneer I dread to hear,
It circles to the right.

I am aware that it is there,
A thing without a soul;
And joy most fair becomes despair
From fears I can't control.

What vile spawn is this that's drawn
From hell itself it seems,
Across the lawn in early dawn,
To figure in my dreams?

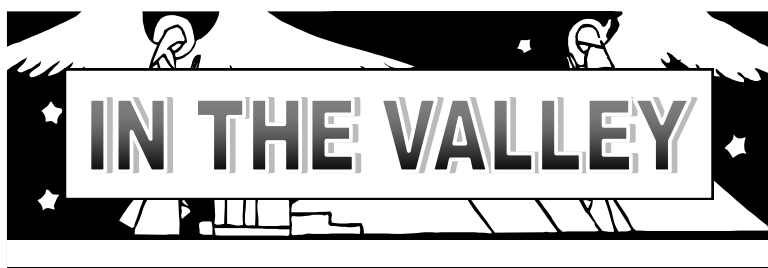
Voice from hell, why do you tell
Your eerie secrets here?
For you know well you ring my knell
And ruin my dreams with fear.

Why do you fill with laughter shrill
My every minute's rest;
Why do you chill the soul that's still
Suffering within my breast?

But I alone know why the tone
Laughs at its ghastly joke;
Yet I disown the soul that's thrown
Beneath my feet and broke.

A shadow's all I can recall,
A shadow full of dread;
I saw it fall upon the wall—
A spirit from the dead.





I have seen the valley of gibbering men
Down where the soulless dwell
In the viscous sludge of their fog-damned fen
(A horror-haunted hell);
I have heard the groans of the gruesome ghosts
That paddle around in the slime
And watched the dance of the hoary hosts
In their palsied pantomime.

The rheum-ribbed rocks of the valley walls
Where the green ghoul-grasses grow
Hold a horrible lure for the one who falls
Into the pit below;
He gazes up at their shiny sides
As he lies in this loathsome den
And he knows that he forever abides
In the valley of gibbering men.

Hopeless and stricken and rotting they lie,
Damned to Eternity's end;
Retching and wretched, they long to die,
Cursing the eons they spend
Down in the depths where the vermin crawl,
Far from humanity's ken—
They shudder and shriek when the Black Gods call
In the valley of gibbering men.





SONG AT TWILIGHT

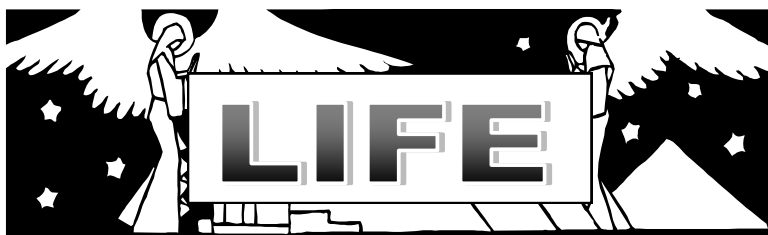
While strolling down a lonely path one eve
I saw a sight my eyes would scarce believe:
A misty ghost was standing in my way,
Wrapped in his trailing spectral robes of gray.

The two of us were both a bit afraid,
I of the fearful unknown weapons made
In spirit realms, and he of my old gun
Which'd blow his misty form to bits for fun.

At last we got on fairly friendly terms
(as the following evidence affirms).
He asked me all about the world I knew
And listened eagerly till I got through.

I asked him of the spirit world of shade.
He told me all, and then began to fade.
I asked him why he came to haunt the brave—
He said, "There's nothing new beyond the grave."





Of Life so sweet I now entreat
To tell me whence it came:
Come, Life, tell me, what be'st thee,
A ray or living flame?

I was the first when stars did burst
Into their blinding light.
I will be last when all is past
And world is endless night.

The all am I, the earth and sky;
I am that which began;
I am the whole, the flesh, the soul,
The rolling sea, and man.

The nerve that feels and word that heals
The sickening pain thereby;
The pain that's felt; the blow that's dealt;
The sight too, and the eye.

I am the rose that slowly grows
And sheds her beauty fair;
The violet, too, who with her blue
My beauty does declare.

I am the one that lit the sun
And all the stars above;
Your heart I tend with love I send,
And I am but that love.

I am the snow and winds that blow
Across the mountains high;
I am the cloud that moves so proud
Upon the azure sky.

I am the whole, nature and soul,
The dead and living too;
I am the rhyme, always sublime;
I am your God, and you.



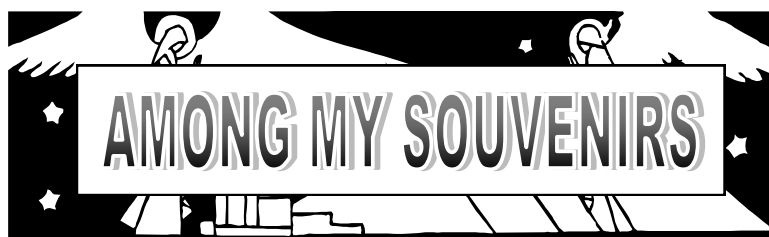


I've seen the heights of ecstatic rapture
And drunk the honeyed dew of pure delight;
I've fondled gems that all men hope to capture
And felt the beauties of a Mayan night.

I've roamed the flowing streams where warrior dead
Unite and sing of battles won on Earth;
I've strolled the path the blessed angels tread
And picked the blossoms of unmeasured worth.

I've crossed the purple fields of endless peace
Where breezes softly blow the waves of grain;
I've heard the perfect songs that never cease,
Removing scars of hatred dark, and pain.





I find a silver bracelet shining bright
Lying behind a mass of foolish things.
It still has abilities to excite
Memories of long ago, when in the spring
I'd roam to find my Barbara at the falls.
It brings back memories of her sweet smile,
And to my mind the moon-lit night recalls
When she and I first pledged our hearts on trial,
In spite of lonesome years,
Among my souvenirs.

And here a tattered, faded handkerchief
With spots of crimson where girlish lips pressed
In broken farewell filled with childish grief,
That each sweet Cupid's bow firmly impressed;
And each as 'twas the day I left and said,
With quivering lips, Dear, I will return—
And since that day I've never seen Mildred—
But times at night when shaded lamp-lights burn
I turn my thoughts sincere
To this, my souvenir.

And here, a dainty slipper, worn with age,
Brings back another name from distant past.
Cecilia, will you forgive—the outrage,
The brazen theft of your slipper at last?
Memories bring the fragrance of perfume
That can be none but yours, Cecilia, dear,
And do I take too much when I presume
To wonder what there might have been this year,
 If this slipper wasn't here,
 A precious souvenir.

And now I find a glove of spotless white,
Its whiteness symbolic of the pale Irene,
The greatest mistress of mystery and fright
That ever in my 'ventful life I've seen.
The girl who played with hearts like men of chess,
Who loved to win, and when she won she'd quit
And try again, a new heart to possess
By fluent use of ample charm and wit—
 You have your answer, dear,
 And I my souvenir.

A glistening stone with gleaming band of gold
Brings back the memories of one dear friend
That'll always make me pause when thoughts unfold,
And upward t'ward perfect friendship ascend.
Unselfish Leslie Prince with heart so true
To all her friends and what she knew was right,
Who smiled and faced the worst but to rescue
A hopeless, wandering lad from people's spite,
 This shining gem so clear,
 My dearest souvenir.

And here a tiny wad of white tissue
That's guarded long a tiny, flawless pearl.
Out from its surface smooth light rays issue
And paint for me the river and a girl.
Ah, Ruth, how swiftly years have flown
Between those sunny days of long ago
When you and I were by fate together thrown,
And now when all I have of you, the glow
 Of this dear pearly sphere,
 A gleaming souvenir.

I see an innocent pellet of lead
That fiercely hurled itself at me one day
And drank quite deep the crimson blood I shed
As down I slip'd, my face with pain turned grey.
I'll never know what hate sent you so swift,
Your bitter lead of death to me impart,
Or know the fate that caused my back to shift -
Ah, little bullet, had you found my heart,
 There never would be tears
 Among my souvenirs.

And now I find a jersey old and worn;
The black and grey of team so long forgot;
But history lies in each small hole that's torn,
And victory cries from every soiled spot.
The blare of bands; the thundering crowd's acclaim;
The signals terse of striving quarterback;
The whispered hope, "We've got to win this game,
So forward line, forward to the attack—"
 Again I hear those cheers
 Among my souvenirs.

All these and many more I see,
My silent reminders of days gone by.
Some bring smiles and some regrets to me,
Some bring lonesomeness and perhaps a sigh,
But past is history; victory lies
Not in the past but in the days to come.
The past is gone, and now the present flies—
But to the past I give a small ransom
 As I roll back the years
 Among my souvenirs.





As I lay in silent slumber
I had a joyful dream.
I dreamed I was with a girl most fair
Beside a glowing stream.

The reflection of the hawthorn
Lay on the water deep;
The evening sun so round and red
On western hills did creep.

The swallows out for evening flight
Above the islands three—
The song they sang across the stream
Was swept in full to me.

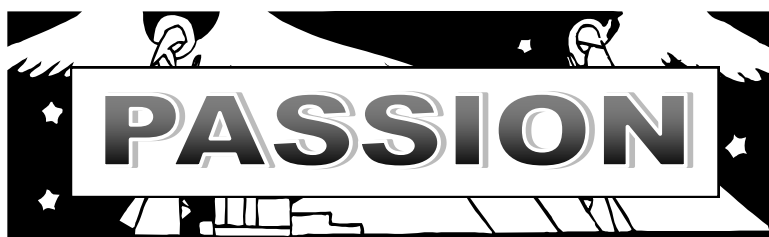
Through willows tall with drooping arms
The wandering breezes sighed—
In rippling rooks and eddies quick
Murmuring waters glide.

The girl who sat beside me there
Upon the mossy bank
With book in hand, and me with pen—
We watched the sun as't sank.

The shadows lengthened, sun slip'd away—
She laid aside her book
And sat in contemplation deep
Of star gleams in the brook.

Then some giant hand drew close about
The curtains of the night—
I laid aside my pen so small;
I could not see to write.





I wind my way through trackless waste,
On mountains high and woodlands chaste,
'Cross trickling brooks in fern-filled dales
When evening's near and daylight fails.
The moon comes up; I cross the ridge,
And in the valley looms the bridge
Where Ruth sits waiting for the sound
Of my footsteps on the ground.

I come as silent as the night
And toss a pebble to her right;
She turns to stare, silence bereft,
And with a bound I'm at her left.
She stares at me in make-believe fright,
Then slowly smiles in real delight
And coyly says she happened there.
(I knew she'd waited in despair.)

Along the stream we stroll and gaze
With eyes alight with moonlit rays
As stars in heaven now unfold
Their million stories manifold.
We softly talk with hand in hand
Of things too deep to understand,

And then she tries to learn my name.
I shake my head, always the same.

And then I'd take her youthful charm
Within the curve of hungry arm,
And tilt her head and dwell among
The joy of lips and moist tongue
And felt her swelling breasts to beat
Against my chest in rapture sweet—
Her arms were tight around me thrown,
Clamping my lips to her hungry own.

Ah, Ruth, most lovely of all girls,
With eyes like heaven, teeth like pearls,
Lips like nectar from roses red,
And tongue like sacred honey fed
Only to gods who sit above,
And heart so full of strongest love.
Ah, Ruth, my life, my hope, my joy—
This from your own wilderness boy.

And now our time together's o'er,
Your wilderness boy is no more.
No, dear, I'll not forget thee soon,
On those sweet nights under the moon.
My name will always secret be,
So think of me as youth most free—
And when you sleep, may you enjoy
Your dreams of your wilderness boy.





In childhood days of long ago
When I was young and did not know
The things of life I know today,
I knew the girl across the way.

We built our castles in the sand
And played with dollie's happy band—
Into the garden we would play,
I and the girl across the way.

When winter storms would coldly blow
And all the earth was filled with snow,
We'd ride the hills upon my sleigh,
I and the girl across the way.

But then as we both older grew,
And dropped old friends to take the new,
Came seldom that my feet would stray
To see the girl across the way.

Her crowd was wild and set a pace
That soon the gossips said disgrace
Had come upon and led astray
The little girl across the way.

Then soon her friends, they came no more
With laughter gay before her door—
The people all they turned away
From she, the girl across the way.

But I cared not. I went to see,
And found her on her bended knee—
Her arms outstretched in 'tempt to pray
For grace, the girl across the way.

She told me then her story sad—
Of love that had concealed a cad,
Who now had fled, had gone away
And left the girl across the way.

And then one day I saw them tack
Upon her door a crepe of black—
The girl with whom I used to play
Was dead, the girl across the way.

And if there does a heaven be,
I know some day that I'll there see,
In spite of what the people say,
In peace, the girl across the way.





With God and man and beast,
And even vaunted fate,
My fight has never ceased
Nor shown a fearing trait.

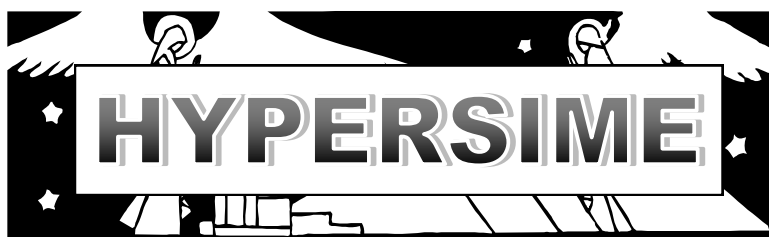
They can't erase the gleam
Of mockery in my eye,
Unless they pluck the beam
Out from its socket's tie!
I fear them not, and when
At last they're killing me,
A blow at them, ev'n then
My death struggle will be!

They cannot break my will;
I take their every blow.
This body they can kill;
This will they can't o'erthrow.

Though Satan torture me
From death forevermore,
His gloating eye won't see
More fear than those before!

And when he'd venture near
I'd strike at him with hate;
The hate that knows no fear
And fights forevermore!





Come:

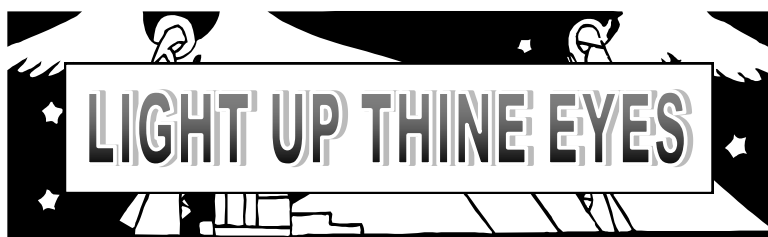
Thou one with changing eyes of blue
Why dost thou stare
In sad despair
As thou dost read this note anew?
What dost thou care
If maidens fair
Are fickle as the morning dew?

Why should thou moan while in thy sleep,
Then roll and toss,
And look so cross,
And maybe hide thy face and weep?
Why grieve thy loss
When cast like dross
From her whose heart thou could not keep?

Spoil not thy face with bitter smile,
Nor seek to hide
Thy injured pride
In hateful words so full of bile.
But let me guide
Thy weary stride,
Life and thy soul to reconcile.

Could she but give what thou dost crave,
Then go, I'd say
To her today,
Cast at her feet the heart you gave.
For love you pray
While she wants to play;
You'd best forget and just be brave.





Light up thine eyes, thou beautiful one,
Of black in the shade and brown in the sun,
For thy glance on the mirror is thrown
And the face of an angel is meeting thine own.

Light up thine eyes, 'neath that brow of snow,
Part thy lips in a smile below
And think of me and smile again
The smile I'd offer my life to win.

Light up thine eyes with love for me,
Give me thy lips so pure and free,
Whisper thy love into my ear
And light my path with hope and cheer.

Light up thine eyes, be happy and gay,
While I hold you close and truthfully say
That all I am and ever shall be
Body and soul belong to thee.



Away down o'er the southern hills
A shimmering star I see;
I thrill with the thought it overhangs
The place I long to be.

Each gleam brings me a vision bright,
The best that e'r can be;
For it's the vision of my love,
My own Beulah Marie.

Come, little star, carry this note—
Take it and then depart;
Take it to her I love so well
And drop it in her heart.

The love I have for thee, sweetheart,
Brightens the world and me;
The world can go on, sweetheart,
If it leaves me with thee.

If I were given one wish to have,
The whole world could decree;
To be in your arms then I'd wish,
Darling Beulah Marie.



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In joy they dance
from bud to bud,
their voices soft,
a singing flood