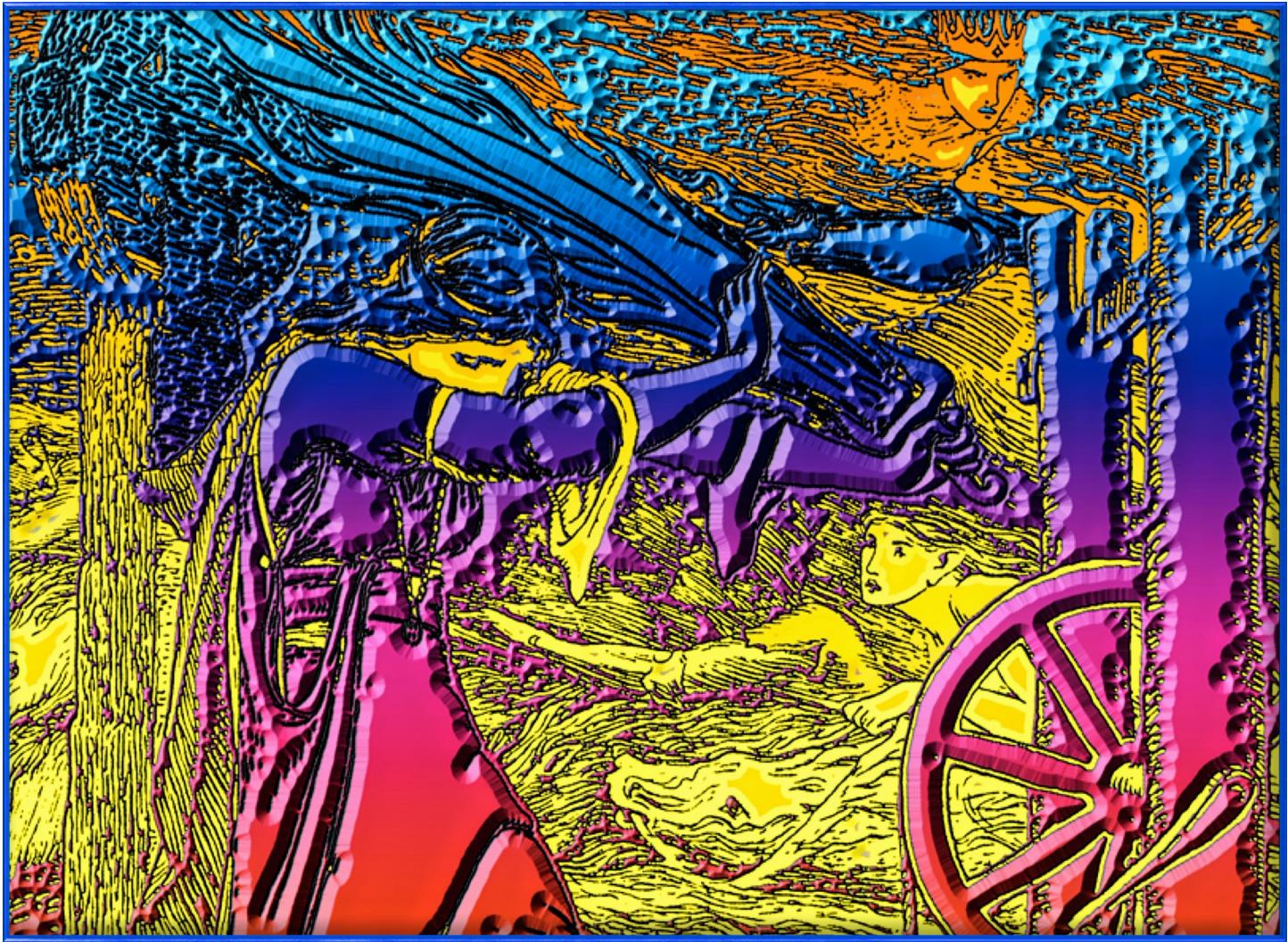


# PHANTASMAGORIA

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Each morning as I soft awake and slowly stir,  
Remembering, I can just barely recognize her.

Even as I rub my eyes, in their own reflection,  
She becomes but a shadowy recollection,  
Although a most pleasant and enlivening one,  
As my day begins anew with star set and sun.

In night's stillness, fancies wend their utopian way,  
Unimpeded in their stay, safe from raucous day—  
Where they quick become fugitive and transitory—  
Evaporating, melting away, and disappearing.

I didn't even catch her name clearly,  
Yet I know that I love her dearly.  
How could I not, for I've created her  
In the most perfect, loving image.

She is a dream, ephemeral and transient.

As the morning wears on, she's still with me, in part,  
Although but the faintest glimmer of being in my heart,  
A mere shadow of evanescence, but for love's sake,  
Of the fading impression I felt at daybreak.

As the day grows onto noon in its brightness  
My remembrance of her dims into vagueness.

By late afternoon, I lament, she's but a wisp  
Of near nothingness, further vanishing away;  
Yet I still can feel a temporary presence  
Of her joyous but fleeting fulfillment present,  
As if she had somehow snuggled into my being.

Oh for the deep clarity of the silent night,  
When our being mirrors the stars and the moon light.  
She has merged into me, though short-lived by day,  
Impermanent, but who is she; what wrote her way?

Well, she seems to be every woman I've known,  
Yet none in particular, plus ones that I've grown.

Even now I'm having trouble rebuilding her.  
It's so hazy now; if only I could recall.

Somehow, I must see her again distinctly,  
In the still night's clear sight, and more importantly,  
Remember the lovely vision perfectly,  
But how can I become alert, conscious, awake,  
And clearheaded sober of thought in a dream state?

Several nights flew by; I didn't dream of her;  
But then, just out of the silver moonlight, alight,  
    On one rare intoxicatingly drowsy night,  
I saw her again, and I lived and loved long with her  
    As if tomorrow never was, would never be;

However, all too soon the dreaded morrow broke,  
And therein the light she waned, lost to me again.

Although she was so vivid and intense, in sense,  
    She faded to a familiar evanescence,  
But I managed to write down her fleeing description,  
    And by that evening ringing chime her depiction  
        Was all I had left, a faint but fine impression.

Though her representation was wont to wither fast,  
    I was now able to quick resurrect her past,  
    Using my hasty and foggy written description,  
Even though it was made in an all too sleepy shade.

For awhile I could capture her visage as such,  
    But again her dear image faded all too soon.

Many phantasms ran through my mind the next night,  
    Overturning into ghostly visions of fright,  
        As all nonsensical hallucinations  
        Of the most illogical character rations;  
That is, I was dreaming fantastic nightmarish dreams;  
    But, my dream girl was not in any of the scenes.

If only I could bring some order and fair sense  
    Into the senseless, noisy, and mosaic mess  
Of my random and wandering thoughts in darkness.

Several notions even waited in the wing's herd,  
For their appearance on the stage of the absurd,  
    And the mass of those scripts

soon tumbled and stumbled  
Across the scenes on the stage,  
had their moment, mumbled,  
Then passed into oblivion, never to return.

I saw them all pass by, as the lone spectator,  
And since a good part of my mind was out of life,  
    Found nothing unusual in the chaotic strife,  
And therefore had believed it all to be quite real.

The weeks crawled by, and I don't believe I saw her,  
    But if I did I must have forgotten the bond;  
However, our love continued to live on an on,  
    As that romantic idea painted in me fond.

I'd an inspiration for a presentation:  
    If she wasn't going to show up on a station,  
Why couldn't I conjure her up through imagination!

It took many days of meditative practice:  
I went to bed relaxed, after a nice warm bath,  
    And thus easily discarded all the day's chaff.  
I then reviewed and read out the script in my mind,  
    Going over it and over it many times.

*Control your dreams' static going automatic;  
Dreamscapes aren't reality, though they seem to be,  
You can do anything that you wish in your dream;  
You can guide and control it. It's only a dream.*

*Tell yourself therein that it is only a dream.  
Grasp the idea's core and then become lucid.  
You can do anything, go anywhere, at will,  
See or be anyone, have anything, bidden,  
If you can only realize that it is a dream  
And then direct the dream's contents accordingly.*

I repeated the words while I tried to picture there  
The most utter and complete blackness of nothingness...

And in there I etched the words rehearsed above,  
So that they would remain, floating, the only link,

As a message to myself after I soft slept—  
To my normally unbelieving dreaming self,  
The drowsy mind that seldom questions ill logic,  
The mind that interprets dreams so literally,  
Because they all do seem so real, internally,  
Which is because the model employed in dreams  
Is the same model that's used when we are awake!

I looked forward to the night, with anticipation,  
Wondering if dream images were really sharp,  
Clear, and distinct, or vague, as in their remembrance.

Soon I would know the answer. *It's only a dream...*  
These were the last echoing words I awake heard  
Before drifting off into that faux nether world  
In which I hoped to script, direct, produce, and star  
In any narrative that I could then dream up.

And there, in my reverie, the inscribed thought  
*That I was dreaming* did indeed occur to me.  
What a revelation it was! A realization!

Still, it seemed to be so far-fetched, so amazing,  
That I hesitated to believe at the time.

Why didn't I fully believe it, virtually?  
Because everything in my dream was very clear,  
So sharp and colorful, a just perfect image  
Of reality itself in three dimensions—  
An exact match to our actuality itself,  
A genuine reconstruction of reality!

The next night I was again haunted  
by the strange thought  
That *I was dreaming*. I still wasn't convinced,  
But I took on some cautious control, anyway,  
So that I could try a harmless experiment.

I went down the stairs to the kitchen in my dream  
Opened up the fridge,  
and poured some milk on the floor,  
Much as it pained me to do so, though cleanable.

As soon as I awoke the next morning early,  
I rushed downstairs, noting the kitchen floor was clean!

This gave me confidence.  
I was making progress toward control.  
I was learning to detect the dream state.

The following night I dreamt again, and took control,  
Realizing that it was all a fabrication.

This time I rearranged the wonderful items  
That were on my bedside table, and when I woke up,  
They were still in their original positions.

I was getting close; I was starting to believe.

I had to be careful, a maybe and perhaps,  
Before doing any crazy things in my dreams,  
For one must be surely absolutely convinced,  
Beyond uncertainty, that a dream is a dream,  
Lest one fall into harm or become inhibited  
Out of fear of breaking the law or passing away.

The next night in my dream I wondered again  
*If I was dreaming* whilst flying down the street,  
About twenty feet in the air—now a big clue.

The logical part of my brain fully “awoke”,  
And said to me,  
“You are flying down the street  
twenty feet off the ground;  
This is impossible; therefore this must be a dream!”

I was thus thoroughly and utterly convinced  
To the core of my being that I was dreaming.  
Now I could begin some serious dream research,  
Living it and observing it at the same time.

Instead of transporting to some paradise,  
I first wanted to inspect all my surroundings—  
To minutely analyze the dream’s images.  
So I made a conscious and definite effort  
To look directly at everything in the scene.

As I flew through my neighborhood, out of body,  
I looked closely  
at each house, yard, plant, and construct,  
And saw that every part was perfectly in place:  
Every shingle and nail, each blade of grass distinct,  
Every leaf and branch vivid, all as ought to be;  
In fact, every fine detail, including color  
And odour, identical to that of real life,  
Indistinguishable from it! What a discovery!

I flew high, low, and far, in this second world.  
The reconstruction of my street was finely perfect;  
No wonder that dreams seem real; They practically are.

Of course, dreams may seem hazy, after awakening,  
But that’s only because the recollection itself  
Grows hazy over time; however, I have found that  
If you write your dreams down just upon awakening  
You will find later, upon reading about them,  
That they can be thus recalled, remaining vivid.

So thusly, after many weeks of such patience,  
Discipline, meanderings, and the use of dream notes,  
I was able to do what I wished in my dreams:  
I toured; I ate delicious food, met with people.

I soon formed plays, movies, and otherworldly scales  
In which each player performed in their character,  
Many of which were unlike my own character;  
Yet all their performances must have come from my brain,  
And fine scene after created scene rolled by  
In 3-D Cinemascope and Technicolor.

I could now near do anything that a god could do;  
However, it was time to find the phantasma  
Who'd initiated my quest in the first place.

She came easily into my nightly vision;  
I loved her; for she was made wondrous just for me.  
She was my heart's ideal molded into being.

Why should I ever wake? Why indeed. Life is harsh,  
And I had just stumbled right into Heaven on Earth.

Well, one must wake to live,  
to make one's dreams come true,  
And to gain input for further dreams, which in turn  
Give even more desired life upon awakening.

We all have to sleep, and must do so every night.  
Why waste it? It's paradise; It's the perfect world,  
One in which no debts are owed, where power awaits,  
Where you can have a second life there on offer.

...

She awoke that morning from a dream, seeming new  
And refreshed, with that free and wonderful feeling  
That lies at the heart of life's exhilarating glory;

But soon the old waves of stifling reality  
Swept on toward her, like an approaching sickness,  
Smothering her in the dread of another hopeless day,  
Amidst the ruins of anxiety and depression.

She was like a doomed ship  
drifting in the storm's aftermath,  
Under a cold moon pale and wan, her sails tattered  
And torn before the relentless wind of existence.

Her dream had seemed so real, so life like, but it too,  
Had wilted in the heat, like a flourishing flower  
That had lost its valuable gleam of morning dew.

*But the firm hull must drive on, mustn't it, she thought,  
Though the mast be broken... No! No more! It's over.  
Today I'll end it all; tonight I'll end my life!*

She spent some time planning—the finis and the end.  
Yes, she would scuttle her ship—her car, at the cliffside,  
And sink within it to the bottom of the sea,  
A river, really, and drown, with a sigh and a groan,  
Devoured by forces too large to fight against.

She drove her car towards the precipice near the bridge.  
She drove faster, faster. The waters called to her;  
Their cool and refreshing depths invited her in.

“Come to me,” some deathly voice whispered in her ear,  
“Come to me and find everlasting bliss and peace.  
Come and sleep with me  
in the endless, boundless night;  
Let me cover you with my ebon wings in darkness,  
For it is eternal, infinite, and complete.”

“No, no, not thee!” she cried aloud.  
“I can't go with thee, not with evil!”

She drove her car to the edge of the cliff,  
Stopping short, now drinking in and dear savoring  
The blue-green world reflected on the river surface.

This sort of sparkling day was not the kind of day  
On which she could end it all, throwing it away.

As she looked deeper and deeper into the scene,  
She drifted into a dream-world of her own making,  
A fairy realm in which her ideals could live on,  
Untainted by pains of a mediocre world.

A voice called her. Apparitions danced in her head;  
Mythical fantasy worlds, mirages, and legends  
Beckoned to her, seemingly from all directions.

An inner voice called to her, the old summoning,  
The sweet voice of someone like her who she could love.

She'd often retreated to this storybook world,  
But now she would take it much further: plunge into it,  
Live within its splendor, in all her being, therein,  
Residing mostly in that wonder—before all else.

This dreamland would find her saved within its refuge.

The fairyland called to her daily, there awaiting;  
It was and would always be the realization  
Of many of the imagined perfections  
That she had always brought into her wishing mind,  
When the real world had often failed expectations.

She freed her mind from its real life shackles,  
And thus began to daydream more freely.

“I’ll breath life into you, my little voice,”  
She said to herself.

As the noise of consciousness slowly faded away,  
Her imaginary world came into its focus.  
She could now paint it with the colors of her dreams,  
Creating life much closer to the heart's desire.

She felt like a goddess, powered by imagination,  
Being able to create life at will in her dreams.  
This is when she thus so inspired created him.  
This is when she brought him to life—from her essence.

His existence was his own to have, free of strings,  
And so he knew naught of her as his creator,  
Just that he was in a beautiful, perfect world.

She had built him in her soul's best image;  
She had molded him from her heart's wishes;  
She fell in love with him, for she could do no other.

“*Come into my dreams*,”  
She would say to conjure him up;  
“*Come into my dreams*,  
*And then by day I shall be well again*”,  
For she was using lines  
From the romantic poets she'd read.

He was a good and decent human being,  
For how could he be otherwise,  
With her ideals brought to life in him.  
He gave fully of himself in life and love,  
Always placing his partner's happiness  
And fulfillment above his own.

Their relationship was driven by love alone,  
And they celebrated it often in her dreams.

She had, at last, found the love  
That the real world had so often denied her,

For she had created a new and better reality.

He did feel a bit of sadness at times, too,  
For she could not totally submerge  
That part of herself, but it was subdued in him,  
And so the sadness was used as necessary  
To enhance the beauty of their love  
With its sheer contrast and brightness.

She gave all that she had to him,  
Watching over him and loving him deeply,  
Utterly, and completely.

Nothing could hurt him in this special world.  
He was impervious to pain, cold, fire, and sickness.

Once he was fatally shot in a war, but he didn't die,  
Because it was from her spirit  
That he drew his life's principle,  
And of course she had willed him to live on.

Another time, he was hit by lightning,  
But as we have seen, a dream can never die,  
And so it was that he arose alive and well  
From the smoldering embers.

He never got sick and seldom had a headache.  
*Everyone should have the best in life,*  
She said to herself,  
*And in my world there can be no suffering.*

Each night he would come, saying,  
*"I arise from dreams of thee."*

"Kiss me, my dearest phantasm," she'd whisper,  
"And hold me ever dear; shelter me  
From the evils and the melancholy

Of the torturous world;  
Show me the true meaning of love  
That the real world has forgotten!  
*Come into my dreams,*  
*And then by day I shall be well again.”*

Knowing not that he was her dream image,  
He never doubted his own existence and happiness.  
When she didn't think of him or when she slept,  
    He disappeared, temporarily,  
    Until she awoke or thought of him again.

So when she slept or daydreamed, he existed,  
And when she was awake and not daydreaming,  
    Then he slipped into that oblivion  
Which he only knew as sleep and quiet slumber,  
    The gift of Death's kinder brother.  
    He was the day to her night.

He arose from her dreams of him,  
    Much like the mountain rises  
    From the depths of the valley.

Without her, he could not be;  
Without him, she could not be.  
    The circle was now complete;  
    The link was closed.  
They had become two locked boxes,  
Each of which contained the others key.

That he only existed as a dream in her mind  
Took nothing away from their relationship,  
    For their love was true,  
    And the feelings were felt as deeply  
    As in the tangible world.

Ultimately, it is what we feel that matters,  
Not the source that causes the feeling,  
For all sensation comes from within.

He did wonder, sometimes,  
About just how good and lucky his life was,  
About his having almost super powers at times;  
But, he concluded only that he led a charmed life  
That had stemmed from an inner happiness  
That constantly poured forth visions  
In positive creative images  
That ever bred good fortune.

Indeed he had, for she had given him that power—  
A power that had come from somewhere within her.

He was her twin, yet also her opposite,  
For somehow she had given him  
An enthusiasm for life  
Which she didn't seem to fully have herself.

He was a reflection of her image,  
In which his outward vision  
Mirrored her inward hope.

Consequently, he blossomed with creativity  
In art, music, and writing,  
As she continued to maintain him,  
As both his protector and his inspiration,  
Although, as we have seen,  
He certainly did seem have 'free' will,  
For he knew not the source of his creation  
Nor of the tendencies that were placed into him.

So they lived and loved together,  
Allied and alloyed in the soft metallic night,  
Blending into the golden oneness

That love had always promised,  
But had never before delivered.

He was born with the inclination of goodness—  
So she never had to possess or demand from him.

Life blossomed now,  
And some of this exuberance did indeed surface  
And show itself back in her real world,  
But in the end she still found her waking life  
To be the cold harsh reality that it had always been.  
So she called him back to her dreams,  
Again and again.

Here they were free to love and live fully,  
Their chemistry sending out invitations of love  
Which were soft, sweet, and smiling on the rising air,  
A fountain's spray of liquid love, mystified,  
Filling the scene with the vaporous perfume  
Of its well-being everywhere:

They were up, warm,  
And floating on the clouds of dreams.  
Their passions smoldered like incense,  
And burned like the candle's flame;  
They consumed each other often,  
Yet continued to have endless love to give,  
Their passions always seeming to reach new levels,  
Then expanding even more, building, ever building.

She had to attend to events back in the true world,  
But it really wasn't so bad there anymore,  
Because she knew that she had something  
To look forward to in her dreams.

So she went happily through the motions,  
Feeling better and better as the days went by,

But always looking forward to the chance  
To dream him up again,  
When she would say softly to herself:

*Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again!  
For so the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.*

*Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,  
A messenger from radiant climes,  
And smile on thy new world, and be  
As kind to others as to me!*

*Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,  
Come now, and let me dream it truth,  
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,  
And say, 'My love! Why sufferest thou?'*

*Come to me in my dreams, and then  
By day I shall be well again!  
For so the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.*

(Matthew Arnold)

She again faded off into dreamland...  
And there he was.

Just the sight of him  
Would bring the world to a stop,  
For she could only concentrate on him.  
When she looked at him,  
The birds' song fainted on the moving air,  
The night breezes stopped in their motion,  
And the moon's radiance shone no more,  
For her heart had welled up within  
And had merged with his own.

She felt herself being drawn deeper  
    Into this dream of love,  
In which there was only one overwhelming  
And all consuming feeling: glory, peace and unity.

    But then,  
During one rainy night back in her real world,  
    When she was driving in a storm,  
    Along the cliff road around a curve,  
Where she had once contemplated suicide,  
    Her car skidded,  
And flew off the side of the water-slicked road,  
    Falling three thousand feet below,  
And crashed hard and straight into the rock,  
    And then exploded in a fiery wreck.

The flames licked at her for hours, but she felt no heat.  
All her bones should have been crushed in the fall,  
    But they weren't. She did not even bleed.  
    There was no pain.  
She arose from the car's wreck unharmed,  
    And walked away.

It was then that she realized that she too  
    Was a character in someone's dream...

...

... *She did not even bleed.*

    She was a figment  
Of someone else's imagination.

    “Who dreamest me?”  
    She cried to the sky.  
    “Reveal thyself! Who art thou?  
Who art thou that won't even let me die!”

The heavens remained dumb,  
So she climbed back up towards the road.

Back at the top she again cried,  
“Who hast made me? Who?—  
Thy image is tainted,  
Thy DNA is corrupted!”

Visions of angels appeared in the sky.  
“You have a question for us?” they asked.

“Yes, what sort of Being made me  
To suffer and toil in this sad world?”

“It’s a lovely and beautiful world,”  
Said the angels in a chorus.

“OK,” she said, “I’ll play your game,  
Shelleyesque. Tell me now,  
Who made this varied and sensual world  
Of charm and grace and color?  
Who gave me intellectual beauty,  
And those rare but beautiful waves of emotions  
Which I have known and enjoyed  
For their breathtaking meaning and depth?”

“A good and loving spirit,” they said.  
“That’s our usual answer.”

“And who gave me freedom  
To love and live and grow,  
Flowering free and fragile,  
Though beautiful, but then withering,  
Faded and forlorn in old age,  
As an evanescent dream?”

“It was the Creator of all life.”

“And who gave me sadness?”

“He did,” they answered.

“And who gave the world hunger, pain, misfortune,  
Sickness, death, worry, and unbearable calamity  
Which drags us suffering to the grave?”

“He reigns,” they said.

“Give me his name!” she asked. “Who is he  
That does not even grant me peace in the grave?—  
For Hell awaits me there as a further torture?”

“He rules,” the angels replied.

“His name! I ask but his name—  
The name of one so cruel!  
Who is the one that would create man  
As a precious vessel, quite imperfect,  
And then destroy this lovely creation  
By sickness and death, in rage?”

“He is the One,” they said.

“Name him and let him be known  
For his vengeful name,  
For in my own fine dreams of a man  
I allowed no sickness,  
No pain—all was love and beauty!  
I out-think this so-called master.  
Who is he that is the source  
Of my everlasting pain?”

“He does not exist,”  
The angels finally said,  
“Nor does the Devil, nor do we;

All is simply virtually as it is  
And so it ever shall be.

“There is no ‘why’, for that would be ‘purpose,’  
And beings came later, with their ‘whys’.  
There is only ‘how’, which is as causeless.

“It’s the way that the universe happens to work.  
Therefore, all is right with the world.  
We angels are simply manifestations  
Of your own thoughts.  
All that is truly real comes from within;  
Nothing comes from without.”

“There is no creative deity?” she asked.

“There is none;  
There is only the unconscious luck towards life,  
Which is part and parcel of the universe,  
Co-eternal with it and embodied in it  
As the principle of movement in all things.  
It is the connectedness of everything,  
And exists far below the level of atoms.”

She didn’t know whether she was relieved or angry,  
Not having anyone to blame for the state of the world.

“But whose dream am I,”  
She wondered aloud.  
“Who saved me from death?”  
Another voice now replied—  
The familiar voice of the man of her dreams.  
“It is I who made thee, my beloved,” he said.  
“I dreamt of thee.  
You are the dream of my dreams;  
You are my ideal,  
For your love is so innocent and free!”

“No,” she said, “It cannot be,  
For it was I who made thee in my dreams.”

“Yes, as well,” he said,  
“But my image was already in you, was it not?  
Who put it there?  
It was from that image  
That you gave birth to mine—  
But the real story is more like  
That we have somehow made each other.  
I may be the day to your night,  
But you are the reverse to me  
When I dream of you.  
I am your opposite twin.  
Neither of us can exist without the other.”

“I believe it,” she said,  
“Although there seems to be no initial cause.  
Very strange though.”

“I see and dream of you, my dream woman,  
Each night,” he whispered.

“We are indeed two souls,  
Each of which opens the other,”  
She replied.

“Yes, it is I who made you as you made me,  
From all that was already inside us.  
As your twin spirit I arose,  
Given life only by your dreams.  
Oh please, let me live, for now I sustain you—  
I protect you and love you  
As you do the same for me.  
And now that I love you and want you,  
I need you.”

“If one of us dies,” she said,  
“Then the other would perish also?”

“The valley cannot exist without the mountain.  
There can be no day without the night;  
There can be no beauty without sadness,  
No yin without the yang.

“We are twin-opposites,  
As alike as dawn and dusk in our aspects,  
Reflections, as it were of each other’s image—  
Visions which truly exist in the mind,  
For all is real in the mind.”

“Day gives birth to night  
And then night gives birth to day.  
That is us and that is the cycle which created us,  
Within which scheme it was not necessary  
For either part to come first,  
As with the chicken and the egg.”

“But we live neither here nor there.  
Does it matter?  
Now that we know that we’re just dream images  
How can we really live and love?”

“We can neither fully live  
Nor completely die where we are.  
What is deathless is also lifeless,  
Although it is still a beautiful work of art,  
Such as the ideals that we see in a painting.  
I can be as real as you wish me to be,  
As can you to me.”

“Some say it’s crazy to try and live a dream.”

“Some say it’s crazy not to!”

“Join my real world,” she said,  
“And I will join yours as well.”

“But your day is my night and vice versa.  
How can we meet?”

“We’ll meet at twilight dawn or dusk,  
The only time that night and day can touch.”

“I shall come,” he said,  
Leaving his dreamland forever  
And joining hers as her real life love.

She greeted the man of her ideals,  
Saying to him,  
“I have wished you into being.  
My thoughts of you have colored my actions  
And have led me to find you in the real world;  
It was a self-fulfilling prophecy,  
An example of positive creative imagery.”

“It was indeed,” he answered.  
“Although here I shall at last know  
True sadness and death.  
But, also,  
I will experience higher levels of beauty.”

She said, no longer anxious or depressed,  
“When you’re open to beauty,  
Then you become vulnerable to sadness.  
What I have finally learned, the hard way,  
Is that they are inseparable in life.”

“Some people lead lives in which  
They are fat, dumb, and fairly content.”

“Yes, they don’t live much, but then again,  
They don’t suffer much either.  
They’re immune to both beauty and sadness.”

“It’s like when you’re not with me.  
There is pain when I miss you,  
But for me, if I had no one to miss,  
Then the pain would be greater.”

The new light of morning shone  
In that blessed mood  
That attends to the quiet intermingling  
Of day and night in the dawn’s misty twilight.

She came to him during morning twilight;  
He came to her at evening twilight.

In between, they dreamt of each other.  
Each day forward was born in quiet innocence  
As their human hearts tenderly touched—  
Open, vulnerable, and exposed,  
Yet fully alive and beating.

Days turned into weeks,  
As they grew close together in the soft glow  
That was neither night nor day,  
But was somewhere in-between,  
In that nether world of half-light dawn or dusk.

The morning brimmed with the freshness of life,  
Its beauty spreading far and wide  
Into every root and tendril.

Life took wing from the cocoon,  
As caterpillars having magically transformed  
Into beautiful butterflies.

Weeks turned into months.  
It was a dream within a dream within a dream.  
Faint images from dim shadows  
Flickered and grew brighter.  
High noon came and showered its brightness  
Into life's every chamber.

Now that they had felt the glory of reality,  
They would seek it always.

From the months a life was made.

The afternoon sparkled  
And spread its gold to every living thing.

Years of contentment rolled by.

The soft light of evening shone again,  
As always, in that sacred mood  
That attends the quiet intermingling  
Of day and night in the twilight of dusk.

He came, as usual, saying:

*I arise from dreams of thee  
In the first sweet sleep of night,  
When the winds are breathing low,  
And the stars are shining bright.*

*I arise from dreams of thee,  
And a spirit in my feet  
Has led me—who knows how?—  
To thy chamber window sweet!*

*The wandering airs they faint  
On the dark, the silent stream,—  
The champak odours fail*

*Like sweet thoughts in a dream,*

*The nightingale's complaint,  
It dies upon her heart,  
As I must die on thine,  
O, beloved as thou art!*

*O, lift me from the grass!  
I die, I faint, I fail!  
Let thy love in kisses rain  
On my lips and eyelids pale.*

*My cheek is cold and white, alas!  
My heart beats out loud and fast  
Oh! press it close to thine again,  
Where it will break at last!*

(Shelley)

He awoke that morning from a dream,  
Filled with dread, dripping with sweat,  
Wondering whether he had gone  
To Heaven or to Hell,  
Not knowing if he was truly awake  
Or still in the midst of a nightmare;  
But soon a calming wave of peace  
And quiet swept over him,  
As he turned and saw that his dream lady  
Was lying there next to him.

“I’m alive?”

“You were sick,” she said,  
“Something you’re not used to in my world,  
But you are recovering now.  
I suppose it’s a sign of age too,  
For we’ve spent many years together.”

“We’re growing old together, aren’t we,”  
He continued.

“Indeed, but we still have many good years left.  
Here, I’ll read you something from Wordsworth  
That he wrote in his later years:”

*What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind.*

A shade passed from between them—  
A door between their worlds had opened  
To let their dreams pass through.  
One shooting star after another  
Signaled these wishful events.

They awoke that morning from another dream,  
Or perhaps they dreamt that they awoke,  
On the shore where they had once discovered  
The Spirit of the Earth.

They rubbed the sand from their eyes  
And opened their minds to the day,  
Being careful not to clear from them  
The shadows of dreamy visions.

Their night-time apparitions  
Had been soothing, calming,  
Relaxing, real, tranquil,  
Refreshing, restful, and peaceful—  
Just like the water of the lake  
That still slept under the morning mist.

They had camped on the shore,  
In a mossy nook between some rocks,  
An overhang of trees protecting them.

They couldn't see the sky,  
But they could see a reflection of the sky  
And its clouds in the water when the mist lifted:

A reflected bird flew in a reflected sky.  
Water lilies floated in the heavenly mirror.  
Orange day-lilies nearby told them  
That that deep summer was upon them.

Haunting visions poured forth,  
As they looked at the image of the sky in the water.  
Soft winds rippled the water ever so slightly,  
And blew the branches of the reflected trees.

Dreamy visions held them still sleep-eyed.  
Again their worlds had met at twilight.

A lark rose from the water  
And flew into nothingness.  
Gossamer threads ran from rock to rock,  
Seemingly attaching them to their dream world.

Was it dawn or dusk?  
In the half light, it did not matter.  
"Which is real and which is an illusion?"  
She wondered.

"Do we sleep or do we dream?" he asked.

She answered with a poem:

*Some say that gleams of a remoter world  
Visit the soul in sleep, —that death is slumber,*

*And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber  
Of those who wake and live —*  
(Shelley)

Blossoms fell from the trees,  
And began to cover their feet.  
When a cushion had been formed,  
They sat down to prepare a breakfast  
Of nuts and strawberries.

Flowers gently cascaded onto them  
As their dreams took wing.

A unicorn wandered by,  
Its existence fed only by the possibility of being.  
A chimera came forth  
And ate nuts and berries from their hands.  
Faeries danced between the flowers,  
Caught only by a believing glance.

Elves rode flying horses,  
And centaurs walked proudly  
Down the path near them.  
These were the creatures who never were,  
All living in the land that never was.

They looked into each other's eyes,  
Reflecting on their thoughts.

“I’m not sure what world we’re in anymore,” she noted.

“Nor does it matter very much  
Which side of the looking glass we’re on,  
For we are here.”

“It’s as if some ethereal beauty  
Has descended over our thoughts,

And lent a poetic vision to us,  
A shadow of some divine perfection.

It is rapt, although a little vague,  
But I can sense its presence. Hear:"

—*I look on high;*  
*Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled*  
*The veil of life and death? or do I lie*  
*In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep*  
*Spread far around and inaccessibly its circles?*  
(Shelley)

The day soon came to life,  
And they saw castle builders laying stones,  
Dream merchants giving away various unrealities,  
Idealists realizing their ambitions,  
Visionaries watching plans taking shape,  
Ghosts and wraiths playing joyfully on the air,  
Vapors forming and rising,  
And then coalescing into forms,  
Phantoms riding on the light hearted breezes,  
Will-o'-the-wisps sparkling over the water,  
And mirages becoming real at the slightest touch.

“I am so much enjoying our world,” she said.  
“Here, all things are possible;  
It is an oasis untouched by oblivion and regret,  
Free from contagion, debt, worry,  
Care, strife, and woe.”

And so they lived in the clouds,  
Drifted into the Land of Nod,  
Resided in Never-Land,  
And made a home in the world of make believe.

Twilight was yet to fall  
And brooded awhile at the shore.

They looked at the water,  
And saw therein a reflection of the sunset.  
Reflected fire burned through reflected clouds.  
A fish swam through the reflected sky.

She walked to the water's edge  
And looked into it,  
Expecting to see her reflection there,  
But she was surprised and pleased  
To see his instead.

“Come,” she said, “look!  
Come here to the shore.”

He walked down to the water and looked in,  
Seeing not his own reflection,  
But a reflection of her.

“We have merged,” he said, “we are one.  
We will be strong now.  
We will survive in either world.”