**August Night**

Alfred de Musset

**Muse**

Since the sun in that great horizon

Has crossed the tropic on its flaming axis,   
Pleasure has left me and I await in silence  
The time when my belovèd will call.  
Alas! His abode has long been deserted   
And nothing of beauty from days of old seems to live.  
Alone, I come again within my covering veil   
To rest my fevered brow upon the opened door   
Like a widow in tears at the grave of her child.  
  
**Poet**  
Greetings to my faithful friend!  
Greetings, my glory and my love!  
The best and most cherished   
Is to be found upon return.  
A time now comes  
To sweep conceit and greed away   
Greetings my mother and nurse!  
Greetings, greetings my consolatrix!  
Open your arms; with songs I greet you.   
  
**Muse**  
Why do you, with heart so changed, heart deprived of hope,   
Flee so often to return so late?  
What do you seek if not misfortune?   
And with what do you return if not some burden?  
What do you do far from me when I wait until day?  
You pursue a flickering spark in deepest night.  
Nothing remains of worldly pleasures  
But helpless contempt for our honest love.  
Your study was empty when I arrived  
Whilst on the balcony, worried and thoughtful,   
I saw in a dream the walls of your garden  
And you delivered to shadows of an unfortunate fate.  
Some proud beauty has kept you bound in chains,   
And you let this poor laurel die

Whose last branches in more pleasant times,   
Had to be watered with tears from your eyes.   
This sad green is my living symbol;

But, through your forgetfulness, my friend, we both shall die;  
And its faint perfume, like a bird in flight,  
Will fly with my memories into the heavens.

**Poet**  
When I passed over the field,  
I saw, this evening, on the path,  
A trembling and withered flower ;   
A pale flower of eglantine.

In displays of green buds  
From a shrub at its side,  
I saw a flower that dawned anew;   
The youngest had the greatest beauty.   
Such is man, always new.  
  
**Muse**  
Alas! Always man. Alas! Always tears.  
Always with dust on foot and perspiring brow!  
Always terrible battles and blood soaked arms;  
His heart a fair deceiver, the wound too deep;  
Alas ! Throughout the land, life is always the same;  
Desire and regrets grasp and extend their hand ;  
Always the same actors and the same play,  
And no matter what has invented human hypocrisy,  
Nothing of truth lies beneath the human frame.   
Alas, my beloved, you are a poet no more.  
Nothing will wake again your silent lyre;   
You drown your heart in a wavering dream;   
And do not know that a woman’s love changes  
And dissolves in tears the wealth of your soul,  
Or that God regards tears more important than blood.  
  
**Poet**  
When I passed through the valley,   
A bird sang on her nest.   
Her brood, her dear young chicks,  
Had met their deaths that night.  
Yet, she sang to the sun;   
O, my muse, do not weep.   
To him, who has lost all, God remains;   
God above, hope below.

**Muse**  
And what will you find on the day when misfortune  
Draws you back to your family hearth?  
When your trembling hands wipe away the dust  
From your poor little room that you thought to forget,  
With what effrontery will you enter your home   
To seek a brief peace and hospitality?

A voice will be there to demand at all hours  
What you have done with your life and liberty.  
Do you believe that one can forget as much as one wishes?  
Do you believe you will find it by searching?

Your heart or you; which is the poet?  
It is your heart and your heart will not respond.

Love will have broken; fatal passions   
Will turn to stone on contact with evil;

You feel, once more, that the appalling remnants  
Stir again as if they were serpents.   
O, heaven! Who will aid you? What shall I do myself  
When he, who can do all, denies that I love you;   
And when my golden wings, quivering in spite of myself,  
Carry me to you in order to save you?

Poor child! Our loves were not challenged   
When, in the woods of Auteuil, lost in your thoughts,   
Beneath green chestnut trees and white poplars,  
I taxed you at evening in your nonchalant walks.  
Ah ! I was young, then, and nymphs and dryads  
Parted for me to see the wood as well as the trees.

And the tears that flowed during our walks   
Fell as pure as gold in crystal clear waters.   
What have you done, my love, with the days of your youth?   
Who has plucked the fruit from my enchanted tree?   
Alas! The bloom of your cheek has pleased the goddess  
Who bears strength and health in her hands.  
Tears from your senseless eyes have paled;   
And like your beauty, you will lose your virtue.   
And if I, who will love you as her only friend   
When angry gods take your genius away,   
Were to fall from the skies, what would be your response?

**Poet**  
Since the woodbird still flutters and sings  
On the branch with her broken eggs in her nest;  
And the flower in the field that opens to dawn,  
Seeing another bloom on the lawn,  
Shrinks without sound and dies with the night.

Since, in the depths of the forest, beneath the green roofs   
One hears on the path the creak of dead wood,  
And man, in traversing this immortal nature,  
Has not been able to find a science that lasts,  
He always walks on and always forgets;  
  
Since, until the rocks all change to dust;   
Since everything dies at evening to live, once more, tomorrow  
Thus giving life to murder and war;

And one sees on a grave rising from earth   
Blades of sacred grass that give us our bread;  
  
O, Muse ! Of what importance is life or death to me?  
I love and want to turn pale; I love and I want to suffer;  
I love and give my genius for a kiss;  
I love and want to feel an endless fountain  
Flowing across my withered cheek.  
  
I love and want to sing of joy and indolence,   
Of my mad passions and my cares of the day,  
And I want to recount and repeat without cease   
That after renouncing life with my lover,

I have sworn to live and to die of love.  
  
Strip away all pride that consumes you, heart,  
Inflated by bitterness and closed to the world.  
Love, and be reborn as if a flower in bloom.   
When one has suffered, one must continue to suffer;

When one has loved, one must love without end.

*Translation: © David Paley*