

The Siren-Song

Wind. Wind rushing through my blood, my veins, my bones- cooling them to soporific lassitude. It wailed- how it wailed!- and invaded- pervaded- every corner of the night-dark earth.

Ah, that sound, that beautiful, hideous sound! It was a hellish symphony: the screaming of myriad tortured souls. I cannot tell you how much I loved, *loved* that sound- stirring, chilling, desolate, sensual- and yearned for its music!

Hark! it was closer now. Close, close- dreadfully, wonderfully close! The wind was wailing strong, beating itself most piteously against my door. My heart quickened with the sound- fast, faster, painfully faster- and sent a rush of pulsing electric heat to my lower extremities. My body was frozen- not dull, not indolent, not somnolent, but frozen- to ecstatic stone. How I trembled! how I shuddered! how I wept! I was mad with pleasure at the unearthly song!

Happily would I have lain so on that chaise for eternity, lost in the chorus of the wind. Mark me well, I have told you I was mad- so I was: mad in my heart, my moonstruck, lust-filled heart. Not my mind, no! My mind- calm, rational, sickeningly rational- urged me to rise, to seek out the sound. But how could I, how could I rise, when I was held so spellbound, captive? How?- how?

Oh, it was so close, so close! The wind screamed in glorious pain! It was fortifying, petrifying, vivifying! It wrested my stupor from me as though it had never been! I jumped- I leaped!- I cried out in jubilant exhilaration! My legs- young, too young for my eternal soul- carried me recklessly from the shadowed chamber, carried me through the shadowed hall to the shadowed door. How sonorous the wind was! how puissant! how broken! how beautiful!

Moved to frenzied passion was I, and I flung the door wide, sobbing in Nature's lamenting embrace. It surrounded me, so very clear and powerful, and worked on my senses like a drug. I could see, hear, feel, taste, smell- everything! Everything and nothing from Heaven to Hell!

It is therefore preposterous to claim that the touch to my leg startled me. By Heaven, it did not! nothing could shock me then, nothing! No, it merely...grounded...my fancy. Putatively. Realize,

it was a burning, base touch: too far beneath Heaven's power for my present ecstasy to endure. I was pulled- wrenched- again to earth- deleterious!

"Away, you indign creature, that so dares to disturb me!" I roared, but to no avail. The touch persisted!- it burned, cracked; but it persisted!- ah, horror! horror! horror!

"Please...." Ah, hark, a whisper! The wind no longer wailed, but whispered!- here! It came again-! "Please, sir, help me...help me, I beg you...." What manner of wind was this?- to beg? Was it even so? *What manner of wind was this?* "Sir!" Ah, it shouted again: what a high, keening shout; what a pleasant groan.... "*Please!*"

"Peace!" I cried, raising my eyes to the tempestuous heavens. "Hold your peace, for I cannot-"
"Good sir...." No, no! Why- why did it whisper? Could it not see the delectation I took from its shrieks?- could it not? Why, then- why did it whisper, why did it beg? "Help...." There!- that touch- again- that conflagrant touch! It latched about my ankle like a shackle of fire! Dear God, it burned!- I could bear into longer! *no longer!*

"*Let me go, I say!*" Eyes blazing, I chanced- in my fury, you see- to look down upon my feet, desperate to remove this demon- this fiery demon grasp!- from me. So you could well imagine my stupefaction when I saw not a demon- not a flame-ringed creature of darkest magics, no- but a woman! a woman! 'Twas fair, 'twas passing fair, with hair of spun gold and skin of milky glass, and a gown that seemed tattered, soiled. Its eyes- limpid and blue like crystal- were filled to the brims, to overflowing, with tears, and its arm- so soft and frail, so very, very frail- hung at a grotesque angle: blood soaked the rived sleeve, and fine white bone gleamed like ice among the mess. The delicate creature's rosebud lips were parted, and the wail- the enchanting wind's wail! escaped them!

Ah, that wail: how sweet the sound! Had it not been the wind after all, but the woman, the shattered woman at my door? It lay insensible, oblivious, delirious at my door! Weeping, moaning, pleading at my door!

"Sir, if you have any mercy, any pity for an injured woman, please, help me. I am spent, for I

have come far, and can go no further....”

Dear God, its cries were intoxicating! Its pain was so intense, so heartfelt! Intoxicating, I say!- simply intoxicating! And this was a *physical torment*; it lay before me!- not hidden, not intangible, imagined- real! flesh! Agonized, euphoric flesh!

I was consumed, I tell you, utterly *consumed* by lust! I needed to take this creature into my possession...indeed, there would be no sense in...*leaving* the suffering thing out of doors. Yes, ‘twould be an arrangement...most...beneficial!- it would have its help, and I my pleasure! Surely, verily- a truly splendid idea!

“But of course,” said I, and I bent- slowly, gently, kindly- and gathered the weeping woman in my arms. It gasped, bit its lip in pain, clung to me with its whole arm. A dreadful shiver ran through me at its touch- for it burned still! it burned! its mortal hurt made it burn!

Understand, I would have dropped it with all haste. but its cries were too captivating- forsooth, too attractive- to ignore. I therefore forced myself to bear the wretched discomfort and carried it over the threshold- for a moment I fancied myself a married man, partner to this lovely siren of misery- and laid it carefully on the chaise in the shadowed chamber. Its eyes were flickering, and it stirred restively on the coarse seat to clutch at my hand, with all its meager, waning strength.

“Thank you,” it whispered- oh, faint! so faint! “Thank you, gentle sir.” And the limpid eyes and rosebud lips fell closed, and the angelic whimpers died in its flaccid throat.

A strange apoplexy seized me then. The silence was resounding, deafening- my head pounded in the cacophony of that terrible echo. Truly- terrible! terrible! There was no satisfaction, no bliss in silence- no life! How could I live now- how, when I had *felt*- so deeply, deeply!- that *life*, which was now extinguished?

For sure, you will all call me afflicted, idiotic, bewitched. Why do you need the song so? you ask. Why, when you have lived all of your years content with only fleeting glimpses of it? Ah, but I was not content! I lived in perpetual longing, longing for a mere *taste* of that sweet nectar,

that sound of frenzy, fear, sorrow!

And now I *had* tasted it- no: *glutted* my soul on it! How, then, was I to continue without that sweet pleasure, that opiate of magnificent torture? how? how? how?

Surely you understand! You understand my desperation, my unfettered desire to hear the sound again! I *needed* it, needed it like air, water- a drug! *I needed to call it forth!*

But how, how? How could I summon the cherished music- I, a mere lowly devotee? I could not carry the woman back out- no, no, for shame! I had done it a service; I could never- not a gentleman such as I- unthinkable!- go back on my word. No, it would stay, it needed to stay...yet I needed its agony!

It shifted slightly on the chaise, and the motion jarred its mangled arm- a just a bit, mind- a mere hair's breadth- but a timid whimper, a tiny, bell-like note, fell from the rosebud lips.

The noise intrigued me. True!- weak it was, barely audible- yet I felt my heart stir- slightly, so slightly!- with hope. Could it be so? Could just one listless movement call the siren-song to me? But...that was so...simple! I could not- would not!- believe it! I would not trust to hope- I needed *indisputable proof!*

My heart thudded with anticipation- my breath came shallow, fast- my brow grew damp with perspiration. With painful, concentrated effort, I brought up my hand- so slowly, so achingly, achingly slowly!- and laid it on the woman's rosebud lips. Its sugared breath cooled my feverish palm, and its mouth relaxed into a gentle smile. Ah, God, it was so peaceful, so trusting- and I stood over it in the agony of tormented passion!

Surely I would go stark mad if I hesitated any longer! With no thought other than this running amok in my mind, I let my unburdened hand rest on the exposed bone of the destroyed arm. Oh, it was so white and clean!- a jewel among the welter of abused flesh! My hand grew warm as I stroked- softly, gently, deftly!- the peak of the jagged break. Scratches began to mar my skin, and they, too, began to burn- not like fire, no: not with demonic heat as before, but with cold,

insidious cold.

The rosebud lips parted once more beneath my fingers, and they drew in a quick, sharp breath, as if in pain. I stilled my movements, thoroughly perturbed. Was the woman feeling my hand, tenderly stroking its injury? Was it pained by my caress? Would it perhaps react more strongly to a harsher touch? No- I had said I would not trust to hope- not now, not in the throes of scientific despair!- but...if it were true....

With a suddenness that shocked me, I wrapped my fingers around the woman's arm, burying long digits in the burning blood. The flesh tore beneath my grasp!- the blood spurted violently over my hand!- the bone cracked, cracked and splintered like dead wood! *It was all dead!- the arm was dead!*

An unearthly scream ripped out of the woman's throat- its eyes flew open- they streamed with sheer, unadulterated agony! Ah, the agony, the pure, pure agony!- it roared, it wept!- it *wailed!* At last, here was that sound, that beautiful sound! at last! at last! at last!

Oh, how sweetly, sweetly it screamed, how vehemently it struggled to escape my joyful embrace! How it moaned, thrashed, cried out in musical, lyrical horror! My entire body burned- burned, I tell you! burned!- with pleasure, pleasure so great that it would surely drive me to Hell! To Hell, and back, and back again! The sound of its pain consumed me utterly, completely, totally- I was in Heaven!- in Heaven and bound for Hell!

I wept- I shook- in obsessive fervor, wholly at the mercy of the arresting wail. My hands quivered- I was weak, weak with rapture!- and I tightened my grip- my fingers crushed the obliterated arm, twisted the rosebud lips! The woman's screams intensified, grew to a deafening pitch!- I felt that I would die with inebriated elation!

But suddenly- how suddenly, horridly suddenly!- the sound...stopped. The woman went...limp...beneath my hands!- I drew back, faint and reeling, staring at its broken body in a haze- I was in shock! Why had it stopped, why? Why did it not move? Why did it not breathe? *Why did it not scream, sing, wail? why? why? why?*

What had I done? Dear God, I had silenced the siren! It moved no more- no more! no more!- and lay frozen, warped, bleeding sluggishly on the chaise! What had I done? Had I killed it- Heaven, let it not be so! Had I? had I? No, no!- *let it not be so!* I could not have been so violent, so- so- *no! I would not believe it! I would not! no! no! NO!*

My sight went dark then- vision dim, ears ringing, heart racing like a war-drum. So great had my ecstasy been- ha! ha! ha! A ruse! A foolish flight, a fatal, fatal attraction! Oh, a ruse, a cursed ruse! ha! I was in Hell- not Heaven, no, no longer! Mark me, in Hell! Devil take me, for I had killed the siren! How would I live? Tell me- tell me, I beg you!- how would I live? *I had killed it! killed it!* No longer would I hear its song- no longer! no longer! I would die, die without it! Surely! Verily, indubitably, undoubtedly!

I had killed it! I had killed it! I had killed it! Ah, God, its body unnerved me, sickened me. Its blood ran from its arm, its mouth- a river! a river of blood! a sea of blood! a sea! And its eyes, oh, its limpid eyes- they were staring- tearful, macabre, set- no, I could not look upon its hideous, silent form! *I would not look upon its hideous, silent form!*

With a roar of fury- demented, demonic fury- I threw myself upon the body, my nails ripping the still-soft flesh to shreds. Ah, God, the blood! the burning blood! It covered me, saturated me! Choking, gasping, raving- oh, for certain, I looked a sight!- I dragged it out the door and bore it away, away, away from the door! I left it by the road- miles, miles away! There! leave it to the ravens! let them taste the forbidden fruit! I could taste it no longer- not I! not I!

The sky above me felt my pain- it broke, weeping, weeping like my torn soul. It understood! Surely it felt- it *knew*- my pain! Yes- it knew! it knew! it knew! And I reveled in its empathy- I ran- I tumbled and slid and ran- under the grieving sky. How it grieved! how it mourned! But it did not wail! I was bereft, bereft of my one pleasure for eternity- and what was I to do? Live in anguish? torment? longing? Ha! ha! ha! ha! Absurd! Absolute, utter folly! No, by Heaven! Never would I *dare*- how could I live so? how? how?

There was but one solution. Damned as I was, what would one more sin do to me, what?

Nothing! nothing! nothing at all! And, oh, my feet, my clever, stalwart feet- how kind that they should take me again to my door! How kind that they should lead me to the chaise, let me raise it up! And raise it I did! I raised it high- precariously high- and brought it down upon myself. The rough wood shattered, and I felt myself crumple like paper to the bloodied floor, insane, insane with pain- I grabbed the sharp stakes of wood and drove them into myself- once, twice, thrice- and the blood spurted out, burning, burning like Hell-fire! And in the midst of the onslaught of agony I heard the siren-song once more- one more note of jubilee before the black flames of Hell approached...to devour...my...eternal soul....