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The Mistress of the Damned

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“...my heart’s queen and the mistress of my bed
There purring with the rest at my distress
And sometimes tossing them a stale caress.”

-Les Fleurs du Mal, Baudelaire.

“For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.”

-Sonnets, Shakespeare.

I

For three nights the arms clashed,
and the flames crackled,
and the screams rose and filled the air:
death-shrieks that like some unholy vapour
made the earth moist and dark,
oozy and unsavoury;
or, like carrion-eaters in one fell swoop
tore through the petrified souls of men.

Then did the Palace fall to its foes.



By some grim and clandestine plot,
(the knowledge of which came through obscure channels)
that ever joined the defiled bed
to the treacherous friendship
in a sinful union whose consummation,
like the coupling of serpents, was both
hideous and haunting to the common mind,
as all betrayals are,
I was dethroned.
“Little mercy is there where Hate reigns supreme”-
so I was told and kindly left to die
in exile.

II

For three years I wandered
over realms little known or not known at all,
bore all Weathers as they came and went-
moist and hot and cold-
and climbed rugged mountains,
or, sailed through mists and tempests
to wild and luscious islands
with one deadly intent:
to harness the elixir of vengeance-
the perfect weapon to wrought death.
From quick-scathing daggers to slow-simmering poisons:
I mastered them all, and yet
found none that may embody to its full
my great resentment
till I was intuitively led to the object



of my desire.

Knowledge it was that I sought.

III

For three days I observed them,
the inhabitants of the land
that, hitherto alien to common knowledge,
was yet presented to me
providentially.

It was a vile land
that produced nature's worst savages,
villainous and depraved in the extreme,
but duly religious to a scary goddess.

On the Sabbath day, they assembled
on a narrow valley, the face of which was scarred
by the approach of a river whose
labyrinthine course ran shallow into a roofless cave.
It was a mystic place.

As their rituals proceeded,
the water in the cave grew restless,
and imperfectly mirrored
a dim and obnoxious sky
adorned by a sickly untimely moon.
Then, as all voices rose in unison,
the Cave echoed:

“Hail to thee Goddess: Mistress of the Damned!”



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Curious to my bones, I drew near
and saw, while a smile crept into my face
and a crooked sense of power tingled my brain,
the familiar face of my mistress.

And now my victory was complete.
For what could be more overpowering
than either life, or death, or even both assorted,
but the dark secret knowledge of the godhead?