

Because I Could Not Stop for Death

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.

5

We slowly drove—He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility—

10

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess—in the Ring—
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—
We passed the Setting Sun—

Or rather—He passed Us—
The Dews drew quivering and chill—
For only Gossamer, my Gown—
My Tippet°—only Tulle°—

15

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground—
The Roof was scarcely visible—
The Cornice—in the Ground—

20

Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity—

The Heaven of Animals

Here they are. The soft eyes open
If they have lived in a wood
It is a wood.

If they have lived on plains
It is grass rolling
Under their feet forever.

5

Having no souls, they have come,
Anyway, beyond their knowing.
Their instincts wholly bloom
And they rise.
The soft eyes open.

10

To match them, the landscape flowers,
 Outdoing, desperately
 Outdoing what is required:
 The richest wood,
 The deepest field.

15

For some of these,
 It could not be the place
 It is, without blood.
 These hunt, as they have done,
 But with claws and teeth grown perfect,

20

More deadly than they can believe.
 They stalk more silently,
 And crouch on the limbs of trees,
 And their descent
 Upon the bright backs of their prey

25

May take years
 In a sovereign floating of joy.
 And those that are hunted
 Know this as their life,
 Their reward: to walk

30

Under such trees in full knowledge
 Of what is in glory above them,
 And to feel no fear,
 But acceptance, compliance.
 Fulfilling themselves without pain

35

At the cycle's center,
 They tremble, they walk
 Under the tree,
 They fall, they are torn,
 They rise, they walk again.

40

—1962

The Raven

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak
and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.” 5

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon
the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the
lost Lenore— 10

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
Lenore—

Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
 To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
 This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining 75
 On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
 But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an
 unseen censer
 Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor. 80
 "Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he
 hath sent thee.

Respite—respite and nepenthe° from thy memories of
 Lenore;
 Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost
 Lenore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or
 devil!— 85

Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here
 ashore,

Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
 On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
 Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." 90

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
 By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both
 adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,°
 It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name
 Lenore—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
 Lenore." 95

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked,
 upstarting—

"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath
spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my
door!

100

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off
my door!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is
dreaming,

105

And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on
the floor;

And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

—1845