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Sunset Story

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STILL THE LONG HILLS

Still the long hills listen to the sky
 And grass is well aware of root,
 Stone of water cutting through its rind,
 And depth is equipoised with height.
 The pure antinomy of mind,
 Blooded to the human brute,
 Contradicts our right to try
 The hidden roots beneath the night.

Though still the cache of green is caught
 In a seed or root unstirred,
 The tensile fruitfulness is there;
 Time's quivering tegment awaits the rain
 On landscapes angular and bare
 To thrust a singing poise in fallow word,
 Equilibrate our blood and thought,
 Make roots beneath our night grow taut and green again.

C H A R L E S E D W A R D E A T O N

SUNSET STORY

The sun, in touching earth, turned arid mountains crimson,
 Changed the brown mesa to a wall of fire and gold,
 And lit the sky with colored fires. Above I saw
 The flaming Hand that drove the first-created two
 From Eden. (What was it God said long ago of sin
 And salary and death?) Proud Sodom and Gomorrah
 Blazed again; an ice-cube cloud became the salt
 That was Lot's wife. The burning bush of Moses' terror
 Rekindled in those desert clouds along with pyres
 Consuming beautiful dead flesh; Olympic torches
 And smoking altar flares incensed the ancient gods.
 The fabled gardens where the golden peacocks strutted
 Burned there with fallen Troy; Rome illumined seven hills
 To Nero's music haunting cyclamen-petal air
 On gold-grained sand. Medieval burning-places followed;
 Gave way to red flamingos in Tampican waters,

And the swirling capes of matadors and dancers.
These mingled with a rain of fire upon the cities
Of China and modern Europe, and the ultimate flame
Dying to embers in bombed houses; and white clouds
Of Arctic wastes. Then at last a strip of platinum water,
Cool as the Nile where floated Cleopatra's barge
With purple sails; and from the West a ray like dawn.

IRMA WASSALL

DESTRUCTION

At my side, unceasingly, a Demon rests
Or staggers like the intangible air;
I swallow! and feel him fill my breast
With culprit and unslaked desire.

Often, knowing my love of Art, he feigns
The form of the most incredible of women,
Or else, under false pretences, stains
My lip with philtres of the sweetest poison.

Then he conducts me, far from the eye of Heaven,
Choking with exhaustion, shattered with fever,
Through fields of Melancholy, infinite, soundless,

And throws in my face, full of meek confusion,
The vilest of garments, gaping wounds,
The bleeding apparatus of Destruction!

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
(Translated by Charles Henri Ford)

THE ANCIENT WAYS

Always women are tending the graves.
Old women kneel and pluck up little weeds
With knotted hands.
Young women walk the paths between the graves
With heads held proudly
But with stony eyes—

And everywhere I look are
Uniforms.