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# Three Poems in Prose

By CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

(Translated by Clark Ashton Smith)

## *L'Irréparable*

### I

**C**AN we stifle the old, the long Remorse, who lives and moves and twists and turns, and feeds upon us like the worm upon the dead, or like the caterpillar upon the oak? Can we stifle the implacable Remorse?

In what philtre, in what wine, in what magistral, may we drown this ancient enemy, gluttonous and destructive like the courtesan, patient like the ant? In what philtre?—in what wine?—in what magistral?

Tell it, fair sorceress, oh! tell, if thou dost know, to a spirit crushed with anguish, and like to one who is overwhelmed by mortal wounds and bruised by the hoofs of horses; tell it, fair sorceress, oh! tell, if thou dost know, to this dying wretch whom the wolf already smells, and whom the crow surveys; to this broken soldier who must needs despair of having his cross and his tomb; this dying wretch whom the wolf already smells!

Can one illuminate a black and muddy sky? Can one tear apart the darkness more dense than pitch, without morn and without even, without stars, without funereal lightnings? Can one illuminate a black and muddy sky?

Our hope, that burned in the panes of the tavern, is blown out, is dead forever! Without moon and without rays, to find where lodge the martyrs of an evil road! The Devil has put out all the panes of the tavern!

Adorable sorceress, dost thou love the damned? Say, dost thou know

the irretrievable? Dost thou know Remorse, with the envenomed darts, for whom our heart serves as target? Adorable sorceress, dost thou love the damned?

The Irreparable gnaws with its accursed teeth; it gnaws our soul, a piteous monument, and often, like the termite, it attacks the edifice by the foundation. The Irreparable gnaws with its accursed teeth.

### II

I have seen, sometimes, in the midst of a common theater, enkindled by the sonorous orchestra, a Fay who relumes a miraculous dawn in an infernal sky; I have seen, sometimes, in the midst of a common theater, a Being, wholly made of light and gold and gauze, who casts to the earth an enormous Satan; but my heart, forever unvisited by ecstasy, is like a theater where one awaits in vain, always in vain, the Being with the wings of gauze!