

The Arkham Sampler

Summer 1949

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LETHE

Cruel and deaf, come to my heart again,
O indolent sphinx, tigress that I adore!
Long, long my trembling fingers would explore
The dense and heavy darkness of thy mane;

And in the skirts replete with thy perfume
I would enshroud this ever-aching head,
The musty sweetness of my passion dead
About me like old flowers sere with doom.

For I would sleep, rather than live, alas!
Doubtful as death that all-desired slumber
Where unremorseful kisses without number
Will cover thy beautiful body like polished brass.

Unequaled is thy couch, that deep abyss,
To engulf the sighs and sobbings of my drouth;
Potent oblivion dwells upon thy mouth
And Lethe flows full-fountained in thy kiss.

To this my doom, a prisoner innocent,
The docile, destined martyr of desire,
I yield, and all my ardor fans the fire
And wrath of my undying punishment.

To drown my rancor, I will drink anew
Hemlock benign and balms of sleep and rest
From the sharp, delightful nipples of thy breast
That holds no heart in its enchanted mew.