

Charnel
House

"My heart was a sort of charnel;
it will now be a shrine."

PLEASURE GARDEN

Tearing myself on the bed of roses,
I wanted to be made a wound.

Pluck each petal, ask, "does he love me?"
Rosary beads, silver spoons.

Him to hurt me, him to scorn me, him to prick me,
Him to spurn me, and despise.
Him to hurt me, him to scorn me, victimize me,
Adored, sanctified.

Offer my lover an evergreen garland.
Father, I've had bad thoughts.

I'll grovel at your feet, for I don't believe.
A wreath of forget-me-nots.

Scatter my petals in the pleasure garden,
ashes to wax saints and whores.

I'll always be praying the chaplet of roses.
I'll always be begging for more.

III.

GILT HOTEL

Remember, beloved,
On our divan deep as the tomb:
Thick-scented incense, perfume wafting,
Rose petal bouquet, rose flowers bloom.
Damask curtains, crimson silk,
Tapestries brocade and gold.
Marble statues, oil pictures,
Satins dripping, endless folds.
I have moist lips.
I know the art.
Losing conscience in depths of bed.
Leaving lovers with broken hearts.
Myrrh and cloves, cinnamon.
Ornate mirrors line the walls.
Crystal candle chandelier.
Fresco of angels, sacred halls.
The air hangs hothouse-heavy.
Dying orchids in their bell jars.
Insect specimens under glass.
The velvet night, the silver stars.
My beloved tangled in bedclothes:
A pale vision, pillow-propped.
His corpse headless, blood exhaling,
Blood-soaked linen, blood teardrop.

IV.

VELVET OSSUARY

The flesh and blood are weak.
The angels curtains cannot hide.
I used your bones to build this chapel.
I cut my palms to be your bride.
Stained glass of the martyr.
I look Love in her face.
Vigil roses for the chancel.
I drape myself in silk and lace.
In your velvet casket,
I grasp your flesh and bones.
I'm kissing all your ashes,
I'm kneeling at your stone.
An ossuary promise: I never will atone.
Here, but now you're gone.
You confessed me on your lap.
The prayers and penances you read.
A little shiver in the chapel.
You stained my dress with all your red.
I've oiled my hair so many times.
I've taken up my heavy cross.
Streaks of dirt mar your vestments.
A widow's veil for my loss.
I had a vision of you.
You were coming back from the dead.
Your right hand here to embrace me,
Your left hand under my head.
You smelled like spices and silver.
I unbound linen from your arms.
Soil of Golgotha, garland of bones,
I gave my love and blood as alms.



SIN OFFERING is
ALBERT
CHRIS
MADELEINE

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