

# **The Waste Land**

T. S. Eliot

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# The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot

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Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis  
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:  
*Sibylla ti theleis*; respondebat illa: *apothanein thelo* .

## I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.  
Winter kept us warm, covering  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
A little life with dried tubers.  
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee  
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,  
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,  
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.  
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.  
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,  
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,  
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,  
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.  
In the mountains, there you feel free.  
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

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Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only  
There is shadow under this red rock,  
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),  
And I will show you something different from either  
Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

*Frisch weht der Wind  
Der Heimat zu.  
Mein Irisch Kind,  
Wo weilest du?*

'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;  
'They called me the hyacinth girl.'

— Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.  
*Od' und leer das Meer.*

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,  
Had a bad cold, nevertheless  
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,  
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,  
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,  
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)  
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,  
The lady of situations.  
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,  
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,  
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,  
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find  
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.  
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.  
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,  
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:  
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,  
Under the brown fog of a winter's Equitone,  
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

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One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.  
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.  
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying 'Stetson!  
'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!  
'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,  
'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?  
'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?  
'Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,  
'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!  
'You! hypocrite lecteur! -- mon semblable, -- mon frère!'

## II. A GAME OF CHESS

THE Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
Glowed on the marble, where the glass  
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines  
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out  
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)  
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra  
Reflecting light upon the table as  
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,  
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;  
In vials of ivory and coloured glass  
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,  
Unguent, powdered, or liquid — troubled, confused  
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air  
That freshened from the window, these ascended  
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,  
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,  
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.  
Huge sea-wood fed with copper  
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,  
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.  
Above the antique mantel was displayed  
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene  
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.  
And other withered stumps of time  
Were told upon the walls; staring forms  
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.  
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.  
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair  
Spread out in fiery points  
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still,

'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.  
'Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.  
'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?  
'I never know what you are thinking. Think.'

I think we are in rats' alley  
Where the dead men lost their bones.

'What is that noise?'

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The wind under the door.  
'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'  
Nothing again nothing.

'Do  
'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember  
'Nothing?'  
I remember  
Those are pearls that were his eyes.  
'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?'

But

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag —  
It's so elegant  
So intelligent  
'What shall I do now? What shall I do?'  
I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street  
'With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?  
'What shall we ever do?'  
The hot water at ten.  
And if it rains, a closed car at four.  
And we shall play a game of chess,  
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said —  
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,  
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME  
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.  
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you  
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.  
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,  
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.  
And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,  
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,

And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.  
Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.  
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.  
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME  
If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.  
Others can pick and choose if you can't.  
But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.  
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.  
(And her only thirty-one.)  
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,  
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.  
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)  
The chemist said it would be alright, but I've never been the same.

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You ARE a proper fool, I said.  
Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,  
What you get married for if you don't want children?  
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME

Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,  
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot —  
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME  
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME  
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.  
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.  
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

### III. THE FIRE SERMON

THE river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.  
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.  
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;  
Departed, have left no addresses.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .  
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,  
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.  
But at my back in a cold blast I hear  
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation  
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank  
While I was fishing in the dull canal  
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse  
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck  
And on the king my father's death before him.  
White bodies naked on the low damp ground  
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,  
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.  
But at my back from time to time I hear  
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring  
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.  
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter  
And on her daughter  
They wash their feet in soda water  
*Et, O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*

Twit twit twit  
Jug jug jug jug jug jug  
So rudely forc'd.  
Tereu

Unreal City  
Under the brown fog of a winter noon  
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant  
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants  
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,  
Asked me in demotic French

## The Waste Land

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel  
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back  
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits  
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,  
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,  
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives  
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,  
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights  
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.  
Out of the window perilously spread  
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,  
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)  
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.  
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs  
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest —  
I too awaited the expected guest.  
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,  
A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,  
One of the low on whom assurance sits  
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.  
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,  
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,  
Endeavours to engage her in caresses  
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.  
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;  
Exploring hands encounter no defence;  
His vanity requires no response,  
And makes a welcome of indifference.  
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all  
Enacted on this same divan or bed;  
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall  
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)  
Bestows one final patronising kiss,  
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,  
Hardly aware of her departed lover;  
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:  
'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'  
When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
Paces about her room again, alone,  
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
And puts a record on the gramophone.

'This music crept by me upon the waters'

### III. THE FIRE SERMON

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And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.

O City city, I can sometimes hear  
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,  
The pleasant whining of a mandoline  
And a clatter and a chatter from within  
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls  
Of Magnus Martyr hold  
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats  
Oil and tar  
The barges drift  
With the turning tide

Red sails  
Wide  
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.  
The barges wash  
Drifting logs  
Down Greenwich reach  
Past the Isle of Dogs.  
    Weialala leia  
    Wallala leialala

Elizabeth and Leicester  
Beating oars  
The stern was formed  
A gilded shell  
Red and gold  
The brisk swell  
Rippled both shores  
Southwest wind  
Carried down stream  
The peal of bells  
White towers  
    Weialala leia  
    Wallala leialala

'Trams and dusty trees.  
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew  
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees  
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.'

'My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart  
Under my feet. After the event  
He wept. He promised "a new start".

### III. THE FIRE SERMON

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I made no comment. What should I resent?  
'On Margate Sands.  
I can connect  
Nothing with nothing.  
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.  
My people humble people who expect  
Nothing.'

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning



V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

AFTER the torchlight red on sweaty faces  
After the frosty silence in the gardens  
After the agony in stony places  
The shouting and the crying  
Prison and place and reverberation  
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

He who was living is now dead  
We who were living are now dying  
With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock  
Rock and no water and the sandy road  
The road winding above among the mountains  
Which are mountains of rock without water  
If there were water we should stop and drink  
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think  
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand  
If there were only water amongst the rock  
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit  
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit  
There is not even silence in the mountains  
But dry sterile thunder without rain  
There is not even solitude in the mountains  
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl  
From doors of mudcracked houses

If there were water  
And no rock  
If there were rock  
And also water  
And water  
A spring  
A pool among the rock  
If there were the sound of water only  
Not the cicada  
And dry grass singing  
But sound of water over a rock  
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees  
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop  
But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?  
When I count, there are only you and I together

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But when I look ahead up the white road  
There is always another one walking beside you  
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded  
I do not know whether a man or a woman  
— But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air  
Murmur of maternal lamentation  
Who are those hooded hordes swarming  
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth  
Ringed by the flat horizon only  
What is the city over the mountains  
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air  
Falling towers  
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria  
Vienna London  
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight  
And fiddled whisper music on those strings  
And bats with baby faces in the violet light  
Whistled, and beat their wings  
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall  
And upside down in air were towers  
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours  
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains  
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing  
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel  
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.  
It has no windows, and the door swings,  
Dry bones can harm no one.  
Only a cock stood on the rooftree  
Co co rico co co rico  
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust  
Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves  
Waited for rain, while the black clouds  
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.  
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.  
Then spoke the thunder

D A  
DATTA: what have we given?  
My friend, blood shaking my heart  
The awful daring of a moment's surrender

## The Waste Land

Which an age of prudence can never retract  
By this, and this only, we have existed  
Which is not to be found in our obituaries  
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider  
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor  
In our empty rooms

D A

DAYADHVAM: I have heard the key  
Turn in the door once and turn once only  
We think of the key, each in his prison  
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison  
Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours  
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

D A

DAMYATA: The boat responded  
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar  
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded  
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient  
To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore  
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*  
*Quando fiam ceu chelidon -- O swallow swallow*  
*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*  
These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih