

# **Crossways**

William Butler Yeats

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## William Butler Yeats

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# Crossways

William Butler Yeats

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## The Song of the Happy Shepherd

THE woods of Arcady are dead,  
And over is their antique joy;  
Of old the world on dreaming fed;  
Grey Truth is now her painted toy;  
Yet still she turns her restless head:  
But O, sick children of the world,  
Of all the many changing things  
In dreary dancing past us whirled,  
To the cracked tune that Chronos sings,  
Words alone are certain good.  
Where are now the warring kings,  
Word be-mockers? – By the Rood,  
Where are now the warring kings?  
An idle word is now their glory,  
By the stammering schoolboy said,  
Reading some entangled story:  
The kings of the old time are dead;  
The wandering earth herself may be  
Only a sudden flaming word,  
In clanging space a moment heard,  
Troubling the endless reverie.  
Then nowise worship dusty deeds,  
Nor seek, for this is also sooth,  
To hunger fiercely after truth,  
Lest all thy toiling only breeds  
New dreams, new dreams; there is no truth  
Saving in thine own heart. Seek, then,  
No learning from the starry men,  
Who follow with the optic glass  
The whirling ways of stars that pass –  
Seek, then, for this is also sooth,  
No word of theirs – the cold star-bane  
Has cloven and rent their hearts in twain,  
And dead is all their human truth.  
Go gather by the humming sea  
Some twisted, echo-harboured shell.  
And to its lips thy story tell,  
And they thy comforters will be.

Rewording in melodious guile  
Thy fretful words a little while,  
Till they shall singing fade in ruth  
And die a pearly brotherhood;  
For words alone are certain good:  
Sing, then, for this is also sooth.  
I must be gone: there is a grave  
Where daffodil and lily wave,  
And I would please the hapless faun,  
Buried under the sleepy ground,  
With mirthful songs before the dawn.  
His shouting days with mirth were crowned;  
And still I dream he treads the lawn,  
Walking ghostly in the dew,  
Pierced by my glad singing through,  
My songs of old earth's dreamy youth:  
But ah! she dreams not now; dream thou!  
For fair are poppies on the brow:  
Dream, dream, for this is also sooth.

## The Sad Shepherd

THERE was a man whom Sorrow named his Friend,  
And he, of his high comrade Sorrow dreaming,  
Went walking with slow steps along the gleaming  
And humming Sands, where windy surges wend:  
And he called loudly to the stars to bend  
From their pale thrones and comfort him, but they  
Among themselves laugh on and sing alway:  
And then the man whom Sorrow named his friend  
Cried out, Dim sea, hear my most piteous story.!  
The sea Swept on and cried her old cry still,  
Rolling along in dreams from hill to hill.  
He fled the persecution of her glory  
And, in a far-off, gentle valley stopping,  
Cried all his story to the dewdrops glistening.  
But naught they heard, for they are always listening,  
The dewdrops, for the sound of their own dropping.  
And then the man whom Sorrow named his friend  
Sought once again the shore, and found a shell,  
And thought, I will my heavy story tell  
Till my own words, re-echoing, shall send  
Their sadness through a hollow, pearly heart;  
And my own talc again for me shall sing,  
And my own whispering words be comforting,  
And lo! my ancient burden may depart.

Then he sang softly nigh the pearly rim;  
But the sad dweller by the sea—ways lone  
Changed all he sang to inarticulate moan  
Among her wildering whirls, forgetting him.

## The Cloak, The Boat and The Shoes

"WHAT do you make so fair and bright?"

"I make the cloak of Sorrow:  
O lovely to see in all men's sight  
Shall be the cloak of Sorrow,  
In all men's sight.'

"What do you build with sails for flight?"

"I build a boat for Sorrow:  
O swift on the seas all day and night  
Saileth the rover Sorrow,  
All day and night.'

What do you weave with wool so white?"

"I weave the shoes of Sorrow:  
Soundless shall be the footfall light  
In all men's ears of Sorrow,  
Sudden and light.'

## Anashuya and Vijaya

A little Indian temple in the Golden Age. Around it a garden;  
around that the forest. Anashuya, the young priestess, kneeling  
within the temple.

**Anashuya.** Send peace on all the lands and flickering  
corn. —

O, may tranquillity walk by his elbow  
When wandering in the forest, if he love

No other. – Hear, and may the indolent flocks  
Be plentiful. – And if he love another,  
May panthers end him. – Hear, and load our king  
With wisdom hour by hour. – May we two stand,  
When we are dead, beyond the setting suns,  
A little from the other shades apart,  
With mingling hair, and play upon one lute.

**Vijaya** [entering and throwing a lily at her]. Hail! hail, my  
**Anashuya**.

**Anashuya**. No: be still.  
I, priestess of this temple, offer up  
prayers for the land.

**Vijaya**. I will wait here, Amrita.

**Anashuya**. By mighty Brahma's ever-rustling robe,  
Who is Amrita? Sorrow of all sorrows!  
Another fills your mind.

**Vijaya**. My mother's name.

**Anashuya** [sings, coming out of the temple].  
A sad, sad thought went by me slowly:  
Sigh, O you little stars.! O sigh and shake your blue  
apparel!  
The sad, sad thought has gone from me now wholly:  
Sing, O you little stars.! O sing and raise your rapturous  
carol  
To mighty Brahma, be who made you many as the sands,  
And laid you on the gates of evening with his quiet hands.  
(Sits down on the steps of the temple.)

**Vijaya**, I have brought my evening rice;  
The sun has laid his chin on the grey wood,  
Weary, with all his poppies gathered round him.

**Vijaya**. The hour when Kama, full of sleepy laughter,  
Rises, and showers abroad his fragrant arrows,  
Piercing the twilight with their murmuring barbs.

**Anashuya**. See–how the sacred old flamingoes come.  
Painting with shadow all the marble steps:  
Aged and wise, they seek their wonted perches  
Within the temple, devious walking, made  
To wander by their melancholy minds.  
Yon tall one eyes my supper; chase him away,  
Far, far away. I named him after you.  
He is a famous fisher; hour by hour  
He ruffles with his bill the minnowed streams.  
Ah! there he snaps my rice. I told you so.

Now cuff him off. He's off! A kiss for you,  
Because you saved my rice. Have you no thanks?

**Vijaya** [sings]. Sing you of her, O first few stars,  
Whom Brahma, touching with his finger, praises, for you  
hold  
The van of wandering quiet; ere you be too calm and old,  
Sing, turning in your cars,  
Sing, till you raise your hands and sigh, and from your car-  
heads peer,  
With all your whirling hair, and drop many an azure tear.

**Anashuya**. What know the pilots of the stars of tears?

**Vijaya**. Their faces are all worn, and in their eyes  
Flashes the fire of sadness, for they see  
The icicles that famish all the North,  
Where men lie frozen in the glimmering snow;  
And in the flaming forests cower the lion  
And lioness, with all their whimpering cubs;  
And, ever pacing on the verge of things,  
The phantom, Beauty, in a mist of tears;  
While we alone have round us woven woods,  
And feel the softness of each other's hand,  
Amrita, while – –

**Anashuya** [going away from him].  
Ah me! you love another,  
[Bursting into tears.]  
And may some sudden dreadful ill befall her!

**Vijaya**. I loved another; now I love no other.  
Among the mouldering of ancient woods  
You live, and on the village border she,  
With her old father the blind wood-cutter;  
I saw her standing in her door but now.

**Anashuya**. Vijaya, swear to love her never more.

**Vijaya**. Ay, ay.

**Anashuya**. Swear by the parents of the gods,  
Dread oath, who dwell on sacred Himalay,  
On the far Golden peak; enormous shapes,  
Who still were old when the great sea was young;  
On their vast faces mystery and dreams;  
Their hair along the mountains rolled and filled  
From year to year by the unnumbered nests  
Of aweless birds, and round their stirless feet  
The joyous flocks of deer and antelope,  
Who never hear the unforgiving hound.



Swear!

**Vijaya.** By the parents of the gods, I swear.

**Anashuya** [sings]. I have forgiven, O new star!  
Maybe you have not heard of us, you have come forth so  
newly,  
You hunter of the fields afar!  
Ah, you will know my loved one by his hunter's arrows  
truly,  
Shoot on him shafts of quietness, that he may ever keep  
A lonely laughter, and may kiss his hands to me in sleep.  
Farewell, Vijaya. Nay, no word, no word;  
I, priestess of this temple, offer up  
Prayers for the land.  
[Vijaya goes.]  
O Brahma, guard in sleep  
The merry lambs and the complacent kine,  
The flies below the leaves, and the young mice  
In the tree roots, and all the sacred flocks  
Of red flamingoes; and my love, Vijaya;  
And may no restless fay with fidget finger  
Trouble his sleeping: give him dreams of me.

## The Indian Upon God

I PASSED along the water's edge below the humid trees,  
My spirit rocked in evening light, the rushes round my knees,  
My spirit rocked in sleep and sighs; and saw the moor-fowl pace  
All dripping on a grassy slope, and saw them cease to chase  
Each other round in circles, and heard the eldest speak:  
Who holds the world between His bill and made us strong or weak  
Is an undying moorfowl, and He lives beyond the sky.  
The rains are from His dripping wing, the moonbeams from  
His eye.  
I passed a little further on and heard a lotus talk:  
Who made the world and ruleth it, He hangeth on a stalk,  
For I am in His image made, and all this tinkling tide  
Is but a sliding drop of rain between His petals wide.  
A little way within the gloom a roebuck raised his eyes  
Brimful of starlight, and he said: The Stamper of the  
Skies,

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He is a gentle roebuck; for how else, I pray, could He  
Conceive a thing so sad and soft, a gentle thing like me?  
I passed a little further on and heard a peacock say:  
Who made the grass and made the worms and made my feathers gay,  
He is a monstrous peacock, and He waveth all the night  
His languid tail above us, lit with myriad spots of light.

## The Indian To His Love

THE island dreams under the dawn  
And great boughs drop tranquillity;  
The peahens dance on a smooth lawn,  
A parrot sways upon a tree,  
Raging at his own image in the enamelled sea.

Here we will moor our lonely ship  
And wander ever with woven hands,  
Murmuring softly lip to lip,  
Along the grass, along the sands,  
Murmuring how far away are the unquiet lands:

How we alone of mortals are  
Hid under quiet boughs apart,  
While our love grows an Indian star,  
A meteor of the burning heart,  
One with the tide that gleams, the wings that gleam and dart,

The heavy boughs, the burnished dove  
That moans and sighs a hundred days:  
How when we die our shades will rove,  
When eve has hushed the feathered ways,  
With vapoury footsole by the water's drowsy blaze.

## The Falling of the Leaves

AUTUMN is over the long leaves that love us,  
And over the mice in the barley sheaves;  
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,  
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.

The hour of the waning of love has beset us,

And weary and worn are our sad souls now;  
Let us part, ere the season of passion forget us,  
With a kiss and a tear on thy drooping brow.

## Ephemera

"YOUR eyes that once were never weary of mine  
Are bowed in sorrow under pendulous lids,  
Because our love is waning."

And then She:

"Although our love is waning, let us stand  
By the lone border of the lake once more,  
Together in that hour of gentleness  
When the poor tired child, passion, falls asleep.  
How far away the stars seem, and how far  
Is our first kiss, and ah, how old my heart!"

Pensive they paced along the faded leaves,  
While slowly he whose hand held hers replied:  
"Passion has often worn our wandering hearts."

The woods were round them, and the yellow leaves  
Fell like faint meteors in the gloom, and once  
A rabbit old and lame limped down the path;  
Autumn was over him: and now they stood  
On the lone border of the lake once more:  
Turning, he saw that she had thrust dead leaves  
Gathered in silence, dewy as her eyes,  
In bosom and hair.

"Ah, do not mourn," he said,

"That we are tired, for other loves await us;  
Hate on and love through unrepining hours.  
Before us lies eternity; our souls  
Are love, and a continual farewell."

## The Madness of King Goll

I SAT on cushioned otter–skin:  
My word was law from Ith to Emain,  
And shook at Inver Amergin  
The hearts of the world–troubling seamen,  
And drove tumult and war away  
From girl and boy and man and beast;  
The fields grew fatter day by day,  
The wild fowl of the air increased;  
And every ancient Ollave said,  
While he bent down his fading head.  
'He drives away the Northern cold.'  
They will not hush, the leaves a–flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

I sat and mused and drank sweet wine;  
A herdsman came from inland valleys,  
Crying, the pirates drove his swine  
To fill their dark–beaked hollow galleys.  
I called my battle–breaking men  
And my loud brazen battle–cars  
From rolling vale and rivery glen;  
And under the blinking of the stars  
Fell on the pirates by the deep,  
And hurled them in the gulph of sleep:  
These hands won many a torque of gold.  
They will not hush, the leaves a–flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

But slowly, as I shouting slew  
And trampled in the bubbling mire,  
In my most secret spirit grew  
A whirling and a wandering fire:  
I stood: keen stars above me shone,  
Around me shone keen eyes of men:  
I laughed aloud and hurried on  
By rocky shore and rushy fen;  
I laughed because birds fluttered by,  
And starlight gleamed, and clouds flew high,  
And rushes waved and waters rolled.  
They will not hush, the leaves a–flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

And now I wander in the woods  
When summer gluts the golden bees,  
Or in autumnal solitudes  
Arise the leopard–coloured trees;  
Or when along the wintry strands  
The cormorants shiver on their rocks;  
I wander on, and wave my hands,

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And sing, and shake my heavy locks.  
The grey wolf knows me; by one ear  
I lead along the woodland deer;  
The hares run by me growing bold.  
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

I came upon a little town  
That slumbered in the harvest moon,  
And passed a-tiptoe up and down,  
Murmuring, to a fitful tune,  
How I have followed, night and day,  
A tramping of tremendous feet,  
And saw where this old tympan lay  
Deserted on a doorway seat,  
And bore it to the woods with me;  
Of some inhuman misery  
Our married voices wildly trolled.  
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

I sang how, when day's toil is done,  
Orchil shakes out her long dark hair  
That hides away the dying sun  
And sheds faint odours through the air:  
When my hand passed from wire to wire  
It quenched, with sound like falling dew  
The whirling and the wandering fire;  
But lift a mournful ulalu,  
For the kind wires are torn and still,  
And I must wander wood and hill  
Through summer's heat and winter's cold.  
They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.

## The Stolen Child

WHERE dips the rocky highland  
Of Sleuth Wood in the lake,  
There lies a leafy island  
Where flapping herons wake  
The drowsy water-rats;  
There we've hid our faery vats,  
Full of berries  
And of reddest stolen chetries.  
Come away, O human child!  
To the waters and the wild

With a faery, hand in hand,  
For the world's morefull of weeping than you  
can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses  
The dim grey sands with light,  
Far off by furthest Rosses  
We foot it all the night,  
Weaving olden dances,  
Mingling hands and mingling glances  
Till the moon has taken flight;  
To and fro we leap  
And chase the frothy bubbles,  
While the world is full of troubles  
And is anxious in its sleep.  
Come away, O human child!  
To the waters and the wild  
With a faery, hand in hand,  
For the world's morefully of weeping than you  
can understand.

Where the wandering water gushes  
From the hills above Glen–Car.,  
In pools among the rushes  
That scarce could bathe a star,  
We seek for slumbering trout  
And whispering in their ears  
Give them unquiet dreams;  
Leaning softly out  
From ferns that drop their tears  
Over the young streams.  
Come away, O human child!  
To to waters and the wild  
With a faery, hand in hand,  
For to world's morefully of weeping than you  
can understand.

Away with us he's going,  
The solemn–eyed:  
He'll hear no more the lowing  
Of the calves on the warm hillside  
Or the kettle on the hob  
Sing peace into his breast,  
Or see the brown mice bob  
Round and round the oatmeal–chest.  
For be comes, the human child,  
To the waters and the wild  
With a faery, hand in hand,  
from a world more full of weeping than you.

## To An Isle In The Water

SHY one, Shy one,  
Shy one of my heart,  
She moves in the firelight  
pensively apart.

She carries in the dishes,  
And lays them in a row.  
To an isle in the water  
With her would I go.

With carries in the candles,  
And lights the curtained room,  
Shy in the doorway  
And shy in the gloom;

And shy as a rabbit,  
Helpful and shy.  
To an isle in the water  
With her would I fly.

## Down By The Salley Gardens

DOWN by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;  
She passed the salley gardens with little snow–white feet.  
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;  
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,  
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow–white hand.  
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;  
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

## The Meditation of the Old Fisherman

YOU waves, though you dance by my feet like children at play,  
Though you glow and you glance, though you purr and you dart;  
In the Junes that were warmer than these are, the waves were more gay,  
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

The herring are not in the tides as they were of old;  
My sorrow! for many a creak gave the creel in the—cart  
That carried the take to Sligo town to be sold,  
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

And ah, you proud maiden, you are not so fair when his oar  
Is heard on the water, as they were, the proud and apart,  
Who paced in the eve by the nets on the pebbly shore,  
When I was a boy with never a crack in my heart.

## The Ballad of Father O'Hart

GOOD Father John O'Hart  
In penal days rode out  
To a Shoneen who had free lands  
And his own snipe and trout.

In trust took he John's lands;  
Sleiveens were all his race;  
And he gave them as dowers to his daughters.  
And they married beyond their place.

But Father John went up,  
And Father John went down;  
And he wore small holes in his Shoes,  
And he wore large holes in his gown.

All loved him, only the shoneen,  
Whom the devils have by the hair,  
From the wives, and the cats, and the children,  
To the birds in the white of the air.

The birds, for he opened their cages  
As he went up and down;



And he said with a smile, "Have peace now";  
And he went his way with a frown.

But if when anyone died  
Came keeners hoarser than rooks,  
He bade them give over their keening;  
For he was a man of books.

And these were the works of John,  
When, weeping score by score,  
People came into Colooney;  
For he'd died at ninety-four.

There was no human keening;  
The birds from Knocknarea  
And the world round Knocknashee  
Came keening in that day.

The young birds and old birds  
Came flying, heavy and sad;  
Keening in from Tiraragh,  
Keening from Ballinafad;

Keening from Inishmurray.  
Nor stayed for bite or sup;  
This way were all reproved  
Who dig old customs up.

## **The Ballad of Moll Magee**

COME round me, little childer;  
There, don't fling stones at me  
Because I mutter as I go;  
But pity Moll Magee.

My man was a poor fisher  
With shore lines in the say;  
My work was saltin' herrings  
The whole of the long day.

And sometimes from the Saltin' shed  
I scarce could drag my feet,  
Under the blessed moonlight,  
Along the pebbly street.

I'd always been but weakly,

And my baby was just born;  
A neighbour minded her by day,  
I minded her till morn.

I lay upon my baby;  
Ye little childer dear,  
I looked on my cold baby  
When the morn grew frosty and clear.

A weary woman sleeps so hard!  
My man grew red and pale,  
And gave me money, and bade me go  
To my own place, Kinsale.

He drove me out and shut the door.  
And gave his curse to me;  
I went away in silence,  
No neighbour could I see.

The windows and the doors were shut,  
One star shone faint and green,  
The little straws were turnin round  
Across the bare boreen.

I went away in silence:  
Beyond old Martin's byre  
I saw a kindly neighbour  
Blowin' her mornin' fire.

She drew from me my story –  
My money's all used up,  
And still, with pityin', scornin' eye,  
She gives me bite and sup.

She says my man will surely come  
And fetch me home agin;  
But always, as I'm movin' round,  
Without doors or within,

Pilin' the wood or pilin' the turf,  
Or goin' to the well,  
I'm thinkin' of my baby  
And keenin' to mysel'.

And Sometimes I am sure she knows  
When, openin' wide His door,  
God lights the stats, His candles,  
And looks upon the poor.

So now, ye little childer,  
Ye won't fling stones at me;

But gather with your shinin' looks  
And pity Moll Magee.

## The Ballad of the Foxhunter

`Lay me in a cushioned chair;  
Carry me, ye four,  
With cushions here and cushions there,  
To see the world once more.

`To stable and to kennel go;  
Bring what is there to bring;  
Lead my Lollard to and fro,  
Or gently in a ring.

`Put the chair upon the grass:  
Bring Rody and his hounds,  
That I may contented pass  
From these earthly bounds.'

His eyelids droop, his head falls low,  
His old eyes cloud with dreams;  
The sun upon all things that grow  
Falls in sleepy streams.

Brown Lollard treads upon the lawn,  
And to the armchair goes,  
And now the old man's dreams are gone,  
He smooths the long brown nose.

And now moves many a pleasant tongue  
Upon his wasted hands,  
For leading aged hounds and young  
The huntsman near him stands.

`Huntsman Rody, blow the horn,  
Make the hills reply.'  
The huntsman loosens on the morn  
A gay wandering cry.

Fire is in the old man's eyes,  
His fingers move and sway,  
And when the wandering music dies  
They hear him feebly say,

`Huntsman Rody, blow the horn,

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Make the hills reply.'  
'I cannot blow upon my horn,  
I can but weep and sigh.'

Servants round his cushioned place  
Are with new sorrow wrung;  
Hounds are gazing on his face,  
Aged hounds and young.

One blind hound only lies apart  
On the sun-smitten grass;  
He holds deep commune with his heart:  
The moments pass and pass:

The blind hound with a mournful din  
Lifts slow his wintry head;  
The servants bear the body in;  
The hounds wail for the dead.