

Marching Streets

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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Death slays the moon and the long dark deepens,
Hastens to the city, to the drear stone-heaps,
Films all eyes and whispers on the corners,
Whispers to the corners that the last soul sleeps.

Gay grow the streets now torched by yellow lamplight,
March all directions with a long sure tread.
East, west they wander through the blinded city,
Rattle on the windows like the wan-faced dead.

Ears full of throbbing, a babe awakens startled,
Sends a tiny whimper to the still gaunt room.
Arms of the mother tighten round it gently,
Deaf to the patter in the far-flung gloom.

Old streets hoary with dear, dead foot-steps
Loud with the tumbrils of a gold old age
Young streets sand-white still unheeled and soulless,
Virgin with the pallor of the fresh-cut page.

Black streets and alleys, evil girl and tearless,
Creeping leaden footed each in thin, torn coat,
Wine-stained and miry, mire choked and winding,
Wind like choking fingers on a white, full throat.

White lanes and pink lanes, strung with purpled roses,
Dance along the distance weaving o'er the hills,
Beckoning the dull streets with stray smiles wanton,
Strung with purpled roses that the stray dawn chills.

Here now they meet tiptoe on the corner,
Kiss behind the silence of the curtained dark;
Then half unwilling run between the houses,
Tracing through the pattern that the dim lamps mark.

Steps break steps and murmur into running,
Death upon the corner spills the edge of dawn

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Dull the torches waver and the streets stand breathless;
Silent fades the marching and the night-noon's gone.