

# FLORA SYMBOLICA

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*A tale I've written, invented, yes, hence  
An attempt to unite the Christian pense  
With the non-belief, in a middle ground,  
Somewhere between mystery and good sense:*

With flora mystical and magical,  
Eden's botanical garden was blest,  
So Eve, taking more than just the Apple,  
Plucked off the loveliest of the best.

Thus it's to Eve that we must give our thanks,  
For Earth's variety of fruits and plants,  
For when she was out of Paradise thrown,  
She stole all the flowers we've ever known.

Therewith, through sensuous beauty and grace,  
Eve with Adam brought forth the human race,  
But our world would never have come to be,  
Had not God allowed them His mystery.

When they were banished from His bosom,  
Eve saw more than just the Apple Blossom,  
And took, on her way through Eden's bowers,  
Many wondrous plants and fruitful flowers.

Mighty God, upon seeing this great theft,  
At first was angered, but soon smiled and wept,  
For human nature was made in His name—  
So He had no one but Himself to blame!

Yet still He made ready His thunderbolt,  
As His Old Testament wrath cast its vote  
To end this experiment gone so wrong—  
But then He felt the joy of life's new song.

Eve had all the plants that she could carry;  
God in His wisdom grew uncontrary.  
Out of Eden she waved the flowered wands,  
The seeds spilling upon the barren lands.

God held the lightning bolt already lit,  
No longer knowing what to do with it,  
So He threw it into the heart of Hell,  
Forming of it a place where all was well.

Thus the world from molten fire had birth,  
As Hell faded and was turned into Earth.  
This He gave to Adam and Eve, with love,  
For them and theirs to make a Heaven of.

From His bolt grew the Hawthorn and Bluebell,  
And He be damned, for Eve stole these as well!

So He laughed and pretended not to see,  
Retreating into eternity.

“So be it,” He said, when time was young,  
“That such is the life My design has wrung,  
For in their souls some part of Me has sprung—  
So let them enjoy all the songs I’ve sung.

“Life was much too easy in Paradise,  
And lacked therefore of any real meaning,  
For without the lows there can be no highs—  
All that remains is a dull flat feeling!

“There’s no Devil to blame for their great zest—  
This mix of good and bad makes them best!  
The human nature that makes them survive,  
Also lets them feel very much alive.

“That same beastful soul that makes them glad  
Does also make them seem a little bad.  
If only I could strip the wrong from right,  
But I cannot have the day without the night!”

So it was that with fertile delight Eve  
Seeded the lifeless Earth for us to receive.  
Though many flowers she had to leave behind,  
These we have from the Mother of Mankind:

Eve gathered the amiable Jasmine,  
Which soft exhales its breath of friendship,  
And by a delicious fragrance in the night  
Overpowers the stars with its sweet delight.

The Jasmine impregnates the dew each night  
With its friendly perfume of good and right;  
Thus morning’s incense carries its odour,  
Keeping everyone in fresh good humor.

Love's first emotion springs from the Lilac,  
For it blooms when Nature is first aroused,  
Thus it's love's youngest dream to all come back,  
Where it will ne'er again remain unspoused.

When Thyme she sowed, the bees came all abuzz,  
And all around it flew their dance of love.  
So now we know that those who would savor  
The sweets of love mustn't neglect the flower.

Camphire, the scent of Paradise, inspires,  
Reminding us to what our soul aspires,  
When spontaneous desires overspill,  
To tell us of duties we must fulfill.

Daffodils, arranged in their elfin way,  
Wear their yellow skirts, like Fairies' Dresses,  
And brighten, through the spirit light of morn,  
Into the fuller radiance of day.

Butterflies come to life in Pansies' psyches,  
Embodied by extension into flight.  
They're flowers floating on the air, propelled,  
Leaving shadow prints behind on the petals.

The air fills with Honeysuckles' scented nets,  
From fairies blowing the honey trumpets,  
While they sow vermilion red Geraniums  
That grow wild into many countless sums.

The Golden-Throated Lilies sing at morn;  
Maiden Flower blushes, its pureness reborn;  
Star galaxies of Sunflowers sway,  
Echoing the luminosity of day.

She picked some Dandelions ripe enough  
To have gone from gold to just so much fluff,

Reminding us, when soft blown with a puff,  
That time will spread us too amid the dust.

Chrysanthemums drink the mellow day;  
Falling petals carry the light away.  
The autumn fog enswirls, the mist upcurls;  
Into nothingness the wisp slow unfurls.

Woodbine wets the air with its cooling musk.  
Bluebells herald the dim and dewy dusk,  
And ring the dance and song of evening knells,  
Music tinkling in fairy festivals.

The Evening Primrose only in the night  
Opens its cup to drink-in the moonlight,  
Then gazes round with silent love and smiles,  
Much as we would upon a sleeping child.

Its phosphorescent light guides the flight  
Of the flying creatures that love the night.  
It looks the swelling moon straight in the sight,  
When they make love in the haunt of midnight.

Pearly Everlasting, frozen in time  
By Eve's purity, survives cold and rime—  
It's a bit of Heaven brought to our clime,  
Where it still ignores the knell of Death's chime.

With willowy grace, Eve fished with vines,  
And the Willow yet throws out her lines,  
As drooping branches that fill the streams  
With tears for flowers that we've never seen.

The innocent Daisy, or the "day's eye",  
Is a lot like the sun—it cannot die;  
It far outlasts every other flower,  
Shining even when the sun has no power.

Arbutus too, whose fruits and flowers of  
Grew together in inseparable love,  
Eve took along with her, as Heaven's boon,  
When she felt the kiss of the rising moon.

Out of God's thunderbolt grew the Hawthorn,  
On that day when man and Earth were born.  
Its snowy blossoms of hope and union  
Gave this blessed world its first communion.

The fleecy Hawthorn sheds its summer snow  
To remind us of our birth so long ago.  
So Joseph's Hawthorn staff along the way  
Still blooms in winter on Christmas Day.

Hawthorn was once known by the name of May,  
Its thorns by then having been bred away.  
Thus for it the children went a-maying,  
And built the maypole, all around it playing.

But the calendar was set back twelve days,  
So Mayday was no more! Yet memory stays,  
And the Queen of Blossom's day is made  
When writers and lovers seek out her shade.

Ever, the immortal Periwinkle,  
Which, like the winter stars that twinkle,  
Spreads through the snow its glossy flowers,  
To remind us of the spring's sunny hours.

Though laughing with all the smiles she wore,  
Eve now more serious her burden bore  
When she brought forth the mournful Asphodel,  
Dedicating it to the souls of Hell.

The Asphodel sustains the Dis dwellers,  
Where they rest beyond that fatal river;

There the wretched shades drink forgetfulness,  
And to oblivion sink without distress.

Fireweed grows from Hell's sulfurous embers,  
As does Purple Loosestrife—dead men's fingers;  
But wildflower air revives the dead—so then  
Those happy souls can thrive on Earth again.

Quick sprout the Buttercups, all bright and new,  
Goblets from which the fairies drink the dew.  
From the Eglantine springs poetry's power—  
It's the only way to describe this flower!

The Heliotrope turns towards the sun,  
Closely tracking its path throughout the day,  
But when clouds appear or when day is done  
It forgets about the sun and looks away.

Eve brought forth Magnolia's magnificence,  
The playful Hyacinth in its sprightly dance,  
And Marigolds that follow the summer lost—  
Enduring well into the final frost.

From the Poppy we gain full sensation,  
Elation, and oblivion's consolation;  
When life's miserable pain is too deep  
It simulates death with a balmy sleep.

Growing in the cold, near the leafless trees,  
Snowdrop bells ring out for friends in need;  
They bring hearty hopes to those with hardships—  
Icicles changed to flowers by friendships.

Eve carried forth Forget-Me-Not bouquets  
That sprouted fast wherever heroes fell;  
They bring back all of the happiest days  
To sound in our hearts as memory's bell.

Holly, the harbinger of spring desires,  
Blooms all winter long, and with hope inspires  
Our cold and dreary hearts to chime and ring  
With good cheer and love for everything.

She took poisonous Foxglove and Nightshade  
To balance with woe the good that she gave,  
Offset by Amaranth, which if kept in shade,  
Would not even after death ever fade.

And for the romantic art, Cupid's Dart,  
To spur men and women to make their move.  
Connected by Nature's arrow of love,  
They deep impart the passion of the heart.

And Coral Bells, rung by bees and hum-birds—  
A melody of tones without the words,  
And airy sprays of frothy Baby's Breath—  
Gurgling with all that's much too sweet to purge.

There, sweet spikes of aromatic Lavender—  
Ready potpourri from Heaven's splendor,  
As all around lay the symbolic flowers—  
To soft drowse the spirits into slumber.

Yet more we know from myth, lore, and legend,  
Of flowers that gemmed the fields of Eden,  
And from symbols and wisdom handed down  
Through oral tradition in floral towns.

Wherever Eve breathed sprung floral dreams;  
Ever she walked water followed in streams;  
'Ere she wept, tears bedewed the Earth in bloom—  
A Cedar tree even grew from her tomb.

'Dead' flowers are reborn by Spring's breath:  
An ethereal floral wonderland

Of everlasting recollections, and  
Some even retain their color after death,

Like Amaranth, as mentioned earlier,  
Or Lasting Beauty, whose secret elixir  
Grants us flowers red through a year of days—  
Oh but that life and love would never fade!

Or Cedar, “life from the dead”, the emblem  
Of eternity, as the preservation  
Used for mummy cases and carved figures  
That last ‘forever’: immortal rigor.

Tracking Eve’s trail throughout the ageless years,  
We find Lady’s Slippers, Lady’s Fingers,  
And Lady’s Smock—all parts of Madonna,  
Her whole self, in fact, in Belladonna.

She wore a chaplet of sweetening buds  
That burst in bloom when fed by air and mud,  
And a garland of sprouts to strew about,  
With a rosary of shoots to put out.

She scattered the Fern’s seed at midnight’s peal,  
To ask that treasures of the Earth would reveal  
The flowers of woods, waysides, and shorelines—  
All remembered by florigraphic signs.

Eve planted the Tree of Life, from which we  
Could obtain lumber, fuel, and homes, for free,  
Plus weapons, wood, tools, food, and medicine—  
To mold the Earth into a place we could live in.

And Clover bushes, the haunt of the bee,  
Bamboo grass too, for home and social need,  
And Lumeria, whose transparent seed  
Looks much like the moon, in all honesty.

Continual Morning-Glories each dawn  
Guarantee that day will always come on.  
Bindweed and Honeysuckle yet entwist,  
To tell us that lovers will ever persist.

The melancholy Thistle is a cure  
For the blues when taken with wine that's pure.  
Chicory in blossoms maroon is clad,  
Its young and tender leaves used for salad.

Eve gave freshness, fragrance, to the Lily,  
And seized Hemlock, the Devil's property,  
Left us Hawkweed to clear the sight and wits,  
And brought Hellebore to purge evil spirits.

The Hawthorn, here yet again, blooms redux,  
Like Blackthorn in Christ's crown, as thorns do,  
Or as wood of the true cross where He died—  
All seem to miraculously multiply!

Eve's saplings drank of the Earth's gushing breast,  
And produced the primeval forest.  
Somewhere this secret wood remains, unguessed,  
The place where all man's sorrows come to rest.

Life is a flower whose leaf is summer green,  
Whose spring was purple passion Eglantine.  
Although fall's second spring may intervene,  
The frost at last is the winter seen.

All Earthly pleasures dear to us Eve brought,  
Provided by the Master's afterthought:  
Honey, juices, syrups—all hand wrought,  
Nuts, berries, and fruits—nothing went for naught.

Eden's sinful Apple, the cause of it,  
Made for harsh apple cider, but when it

Was heated with sulfurous brimstone it  
Then turned smooth, the Hell taken out of it!

The Clematis, with its clinging habit,  
Makes shade of Travelers Joy at inn porches  
For wayfarers wearied, warm, or unfit;  
Its leaves are the clouds, its fruit: star torches.

From Quinine, medicine that could relieve;  
Of Citron, cure for snakebite—death's reprieve;  
The Ginseng refreshes memory's streams,  
Calms the passions, and begets pleasant dreams.

Basil Leaf is a ticket to rapture,  
Passion Flower, to atonement—a day-star,  
And Yew, the oldest living thing on Earth,  
Yet remains alive—six thousand years worth.

The Trefoil, for love, heroism, and wit,  
Grants power o'er the banshees of moor and pit,  
Who would steal the soul, and against all snakes  
Poisonous—they scuttle into the lakes!

Edelweiss, a white flower most gallant,  
Is the heart left by an angel visitant.  
Mistletoe lends a green indoor refuge  
To the wintering spirits of the wood.

The dusk deepens, night's pot of tea steepens;  
Silence descends, as when a gift opens;  
Eventide rises. On high, Orion camps.  
The eyes catch stars like fireflies in lamps.

Our shadows are touching, in the same shade—  
We embody, in third dimension made;  
We kiss, drift, cross into each other's role;  
Spirits open—rainbows meld in the soul.

If Nightshade you eat you'll become as so,  
And will see the ghosts, shades, and dark shadows  
Of those who came before our humankind,  
Those whose spirit-worlds overlap the mind.

The Tuberose is a dangerous pleasure,  
Even when taken in but small measure:  
Its exquisite scent has such great power  
That it can wither you within the hour.

*What's that?* Phantoms that are but a glimmer  
Of the life and light of some halfway scene.  
Of beings twixt man and angel, they shimmer,  
As one might remember them from a dream.

They, cupid like, are the souls of flowers,  
And wear petal cloaks and have wings that blur.  
They sleep in Cowslips, where with childhood's ear,  
You, listening, all their music can hear.

They're sylphs, tree spirits, wood folk, and fays  
Gathered in posies of living bouquets.  
Knowing well the language of the flowers,  
They bestow their favors on the growers.

There's a tunnel back to Eden's Garden,  
A funnel, really—our small end open,  
And through this fairyland we'll return, free,  
To hang Adam's Apple back on the tree.

Sprites shadowed Adam's Eve throughout the land,  
The seeds sprouting everywhere by their hand,  
The growth blessed by a pixie's twinkling wand  
That showered the plants with a fine dewy sand.

The naiads too spread germinating seeds,  
Among them these many blossoming deeds:

Perpetual-Flowering Carnations,  
And sparkling Buttercup potions, as in

The silken saucers for Hollyhock tea,  
In which a child could capture the wild bee,  
To hear the aggravated buzz, in play,  
Then unstung, free the bee to fly away.

The Elves grew Basil, Wolf's-Bane, Cucumber,  
Cinquefoil, Meadow-Saffron, and Germander,  
Even Gillyflower and Primroses,  
To which the fays gave their dewy kisses.

Cotton grew, woven by the wee people  
Into clothes, with a whirling spinning wheel,  
Whose spindle was the stinger of a bee,  
Weavings that surpassed the spider's best web.

Fireflies followed and lit the way for the  
Little weavers who were chased by jealous  
Spiders; the folk hid in a Cotton ball,  
The spider finding nothing there at all.

The weed flowers came, marking autumn's track,  
The blossoms that almost brought the spring back,  
But winter's white death wrap was drawn over,  
Smothering the earth's last warm sweet odour.

Such then comes the end of summer's dreams,  
The blanching of the grassy banks of streams,  
But all fragrances the elves remember  
Through their sleep during the winter embers.

Youth and Beauty made aged Winter mourn  
For Summer's grain—the waving wheat and corn,  
For Old Autumn, withered, wan, had passed on,  
Leaving the earth a widow, weather worn.

The blossoms fall, showers of fragrant beauty,  
As leaves fade while the bulbs store up energy;  
Faeries' floral dreams grant this destiny,  
For these leavings enrich earth's potpourri.

Flowers lay their heads to sleep in soft beds,  
Blanketed by webs of gossamer threads;  
The fairy creatures cast their spectral glow,  
As winter stars—floral twins—start to grow.

Later, when surely all the world is dead,  
A fairy stands atop Old Winter's grave  
And says, "tis not dead", and by magic bred  
Makes Snowdrops flower in the tomb's heat wave.

Winter Aconite, an early flower,  
Grows even under the season's dim power,  
And its bright corollas far out-splendor  
The winter sun's pale and paltry color.

Nymphs slide from their cocoons, their pinions  
Yet wrapped and wet, then breathe the earthy air  
That calls them forth into life's dominion  
To fly and flutter in flux here and there.

Flowers spring from the footfalls of a lass;  
Foliage withers where evil spirits pass;  
But where unknown colors shine fairies mass,  
And drink the twilight dew off of the grass.

The elves blow their pipes to awaken  
Nature's Flora, that her step may quicken—  
And from the odours memories recur,  
As we're given back our youth of summer.

The blooms are a crimson mist, in green blade,  
Through yellow air, beyond the deep blue shade.

A white mist drifts through azure skies, bade  
Toward purple mountains—fragrance of the glade.

In the spirit world, the grass is greener,  
The hearts redder, and the passions pinker—  
Orange, Cherry, and Violet are planted colors,  
And twixt blue and green falls a new tincture.

Petunias grow wherever rainbows touch,  
Their colors vibrant, a bouquet as such  
Of rays that make the flowers glow so much:  
Heaven's prismatic radiance—life's clutch.

Love is reason enough for its giving,  
For beauty is its own excuse for being.  
The doing of good becomes its own reward,  
And the truth does best define its meaning.

In the luminous backwood haunts night plants  
Are seen growing fast from the touch of nymphs:  
Fairy's Frocks, made of elfin sowing—of  
Heart-halves of Lady's Locketts joined in love.

At night, Tulip lamps light the lover's gate,  
As Hollyhock torches illuminate.  
The secret hollows glow from Crocuses—  
They're cups of sunlight stored for the muses.

At woodland's edge, wee folk leave sentinels,  
The Bugle flowers, to announce to dells  
The entrance of lovers into the wood,  
So all can enjoy the amorous mood.

Wherever the elves themselves have romance,  
Wild Pansies, known as Jump-Up-and-Kiss-Me,  
Spring from the power of their loving dance—  
Emanations from the sprites' imagery.

The eyes love to rest on the sky of blue,  
While Eve upon the greensward smiles at you—  
A new life colors the world in between  
Devils and Angels: Earth's human pristine.

Eve set tufts of Anemones, fully blown,  
Ever after given as the wind's own,  
And vines, wreathing and twining, overgrown,  
And odoriferous blooms in bunches sown.

Across the lea and on the moor she shows.  
Along the lane and through woodland meadows,  
Eve—Mother Nature—yet lives in boughs  
And thickets, still imparting all she knows.

Some flowers close, protecting their pollen  
By "sleeping", some at morn, some at even,  
Some at other flower-clock hours—*somewhen*;  
And some, like Jewelweed, never open.

The glow worms, fairy stars come down to ground,  
Gleam the shadowy woods through summer's round;  
Then fall's leaves flutter through the quiet air,  
The autumn being the sunset of the year.

Brown is Death's coloring of all that grows,  
So faeries don't allow it in their rainbows,  
But beyond the spectrum, where we can't see,  
New hues paint their phantom activity.

Elves find Venus shining in broad daylight,  
Knowing where to look as if it were night,  
Then follow her as the evening star,  
Till with her fiery lover she takes flight.

Just before dawn, amid the dew and moss,  
Elves ride on a moonbeam made of Bugloss,

And see the North Star and the Southern Cross  
In the same sky, 'most all the way across.

Now the Earth is very old, but each spring it  
Turns young again when nature reinvents it,  
Constructing the Temple of Flora outside,  
In desert, field, wetland, woodland, and wayside.

Spring kisses the earth, leaving flowers there,  
Like those whose perfume first scented virgin air,  
As again, the fragrant glen, in Heaven's prayer,  
Hails Earth's anniversary with flowers fair.

Slake love's thirst for life's earthly endeavor  
Near a stream where wildflowers grow forever.  
Flowers influence our feelings—deep they roam:  
Flora's fairest flowers compose Heaven's poem.

The pure white flowers of Paradisea grow  
Only within the sub-alpine meadow,  
Not to mention Sundrop, Saffron, Twinflower,  
Pomander, and a thousand other flowers.

For supper, Eve savored salad made from  
Thyme, Mallow, Bibleleaf, and Sugarplum,  
All edible and flavorful flowers,  
Mixed with Chervil, Lovage, and Sunflower.

The Lavender, Rosemary, and Sage all  
Release fragrance when crushed by a footfall,  
So herbs are strewn on floors to clean and scent:  
Odoured ornaments preventing ailments.

Early Sage, before it became dilute,  
Kept man immortal—an ever-green root.  
Though now diminished in its once great power  
It still keeps us healthful in summer's bower.

The Crown Imperial refused to hang  
Its head at the foot of the cross, so vain  
And proud of its majestic reign—so now  
Its petals must droop and weep nectar rain.

Heaven's patron of arts, grace, and license  
Left us sweet-smelling plants with flowered scents  
And aromas redolent—florescence  
In flush and prime of days reminiscent.

Blooms have eternal life in Heaven's glade—  
An ethereal floral wonderland  
Of everlasting recollections;  
Oh but that mortal life would never fade!

When Eden fell, all elfin creatures too  
Were loosed with Eve into the world anew.  
They're tenders of the precious flowers few,  
Of the flora that in the Garden grew.

*There! What uncanny things flock, in between,  
Unknown in the shadows, there but unseen?*  
They're dream-visions—completing the triad of  
Earth's Heavenly things, with flowers and love.

Breathe flowered air and you'll never know death,  
Your incarnate life an eternal wreath.  
Breathe ambrosial incense, balm, and spice  
Of flowers as fragrant as a fairy's breath.

Eve's elves gave us the taste of Strawberry,  
The messages of the Honeysuckle,  
The signals of Wisteria, and the once  
Neglected memories of Rosemary,

And the sweet breath of purple Violets  
With the enamored voice of rivulets,

And Scarlet Pimpernels, that aft nice days pass,  
Enfold—they are the poor man's weather-glass!

And brilliant clumps of Blue Delphiniums,  
Soft Irises and sharp Nasturtiums,  
Dewy-eyed Pensings, velvet smooth and dear,  
And Lilies of the Valley—they're Eve's tears.

Eve carried Myrtle too, meaning perfume,  
To rouse Beauty from her watery tomb:  
Myrtilla rose from the sea in old Greece,  
Adding Myrtle sprigs to the laurel wreath.

The arts were first born from the Acanthus,  
In the wreaths of it made at tournaments—  
They're engraved in the columns of Corinth  
As Greek architectural ornaments.

Vervain too, with the power that enchants;  
It brings on visions of a sweet romance,  
Gathered as Druids did, by inner sight,  
When Sirius rose against the moonless night.

Orange Blossoms are generosity's shower,  
Being at once fruit, foliage, and flower.  
They bear the legendary apples golden—  
Often guarded by a ne'er-sleeping dragon.

For remembrance, Eve brought us Rosemary,  
The Lily too, white for its purity,  
And the Tulip, which does declare its love  
By the truth which it is the beauty of.

But all the flowers mentioned herein above  
Would not have made this life worthy of,  
So Eve took the Rose—the bloom of love,  
Right under the eyes of Heaven above.

The Rose was pure white when it first was born,  
Until she kissed it with her ruby lips—  
Or 'came it red when Venus fell on a thorn,  
Rushing to the aid of struck Adonis?

Or did the Rose sprout forth, all fully blown,  
From the heart of a Goddess, do you think?  
Or was it out of Cupid's nectar grown,  
When he poured to Earth that Heavenly drink?

Or when the nightingale, with hope forlorn,  
Overpowered by the Rose's perfume,  
Impaled itself in love upon her thorn,  
Then revived in the beauty of the bloom?

With the Rose the Earth is rich forever;  
It's born from spring's dying kiss to summer,  
And wears all the gems that the dew has wreathed,  
Blooming wherever summer's breath has breathed.

The winds make love to the flowers of May—  
The woods burst with the joy of Eve's bouquet!  
Like Flora we too from Eden have come;  
From all that's gone before we are the sum.

Now Heaven's favors are spread all around,  
For the flowers, fully blossomed and grown,  
Wave and smile, as miracles from the ground—  
Reminding us all of what love has sown.