A Birthday

By Christina Rossetti

My heart is like a singing bird
    Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
    Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
    That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
    Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
    Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
    And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
    In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
    Is come, my love is come to me.

Christina Rossetti was born in London to an artistic family — her brother was the famous poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and her house was a regular meeting place for the group of artists later called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. As a devout Anglican, Rossetti called off a two-year engagement when her fiancé converted to Roman Catholicism. Despite a lifetime of illness, Rossetti continued to write poetry. Today she is best known for her collection Goblin Market and Other Poems.

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