

Eros Turannos

By Edwin Arlington Robinson

She fears him, and will always ask
 What fated her to choose him;
She meets in his engaging mask
 All reasons to refuse him;
But what she meets and what she fears
Are less than are the downward years,
Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs
 Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity
 That once had power to sound him,
And Love, that will not let him be
 The Judas that she found him,
Her pride assuages her almost,
As if it were alone the cost.—
He sees that he will not be lost,
 And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees
 Envelops and allures him;
Tradition, touching all he sees
 Beguiles and reassures him;
And all her doubts of what he says
Are dimmed with what she knows of days—
Till even prejudice delays
 And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates
 The reign of her confusion;
The pounding wave reverberates
 The dirge of her illusion;
And home, where passion lived and died,
Becomes a place where she can hide,
While all the town and harbor side
 Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,
 The story as it should be,—
As if the story of a house
 Were told, or ever could be;
We'll have no kindly veil between
Her visions and those we have seen,—
As if we guessed what hers have been,
 Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they
 That with a god have striven,
Not hearing much of what we say,

Take what the god has given;
Though like waves breaking it may be,
Or like a changed familiar tree,
Or like a stairway to the sea
Where down the blind are driven.

Originally published in *Poetry*, March 1914.

Source: Poetry (Poetry Foundation, 1914)



Edwin Arlington Robinson is America's poet laureate of unhappiness. In patiently crafted verse of great sonority, he portrays men and women suffering from life's ordeals yet striving to understand and master their fates. Robinson's tragic vision had its roots in a youth spent in the small town of Gardiner, Maine. So sensitive he claimed he came into the world "with his skin inside out," he once told a fellow poet that at six he had sat in a rocking chair and wondered why he'd been born.

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