

The Stranger

Walter De la Mare

In the nook of a wood where a pool freshed with dew
Glassed, daybreak till evening, blue sky glimpsing through
Then a star; or a slip of May-moon silver-white,
Thridding softly aloof the quiet of night,
Was a thicket of flowers.

Willow herb, mint, pale speedwell and rattle
Water hemlock and sundew—to the wind's tittle-tattle
They nodded, dreamed, swayed in jocund delight,
In beauty and sweetness arrayed, still and bright.
By turn scampered rabbit; trotted fox; bee and bird
Paused droning, sang shrill, and the fair water stirred.
Plashed green frog, or some brisk little flickering fish—
Gudgeon, stickleback, minnow—set the ripples a-swish.

A lone pool, a pool grass-fringed, crystal-clear:
Deep, placid, and cool in the sweet of the year;
Edge-parched when the sun to the Dog Days drew near;
And with winter's bleak rime hard as glass, robed in snow,

The whole wild-wood sleeping, and nothing a-blow
But the wind from the North—bringing snow.

That is all. Save that one long, sweet, June night-tide straying,
The harsh hemlock's pale umbelliferous bloom
Tenting nook, dense with fragrance and secret with gloom,
In a beaming of moon-colored light faintly raying,
On buds orbed with dew phosphorescently playing,
Came a Stranger—still-footed, feat-fingered, clear face
Unhumanly lovely: ... and supped in that place.

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