**The Hound of Heaven**

by Francis Thompson (1859 – 1907)

”*As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and imperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace.”* —The Neumann Press Book of Verse, 1988

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| Original  I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  I fled Him, down the labyrinthine *(lab-uh-rin-thin—*  *complicated)* ways of my own mind;  And in the mist of tears I hid from Him,  and under running laughter.  Up vistaed *(vɪs http://sp.ask.com/dictstatic/dictionary/graphics/luna/thinsp.pngtəd—a distant view)* hopes I sped;  And shot, precipitated,  Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed *(kaz-uhmed—gorge)*  fears,  From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.  But with unhurrying chase,  And unperturbed pace,  Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  They beat -- and a voice beat  More instant than the Feet –  **"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."** | | *Partial Paraphrase*  *I fled from him racing through the twisting turning maze of my own mind.*  *I hid from Him in tears as if hiding in mist*  *I used laughter to hide from him—as if diving*  *into a stream or hiding behind a waterfall.*  *I grasped and climbed up faint hopes (as if they were mountains)*  *And shot violently headlong*  *Down gigantic gloomy fears (that were like gorges)*  *Undisturbed and unworried*  *Deliberate speed, majestic urgency*  *More urgent than the Feet*  ***Everything disappoints the one who refuses Me.*** | |
| I pleaded, outlaw-wise,  By many a hearted casement, curtained red,  Trellised *(trel-ist—lattice style)* with intertwining  charities;  (For, though I knew His love Who followed,  Yet was I sore adread  Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.)  But, if one little casement parted wide,  The gust of his approach would clash it to :  Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.  Across the margent *(mahr-juhnt—margin)* of the world I  fled,  And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,  Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars ;  Fretted to dulcet *(duhl-sit—melodious)* jars  And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.  I said to Dawn: Be sudden -- to Eve: Be soon;  With thy young skiey *(skie-ee—sky)* blossoms heap me over  From this tremendous Lover—  Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!  I tempted all His servitors *(sur-vi-ter--servants)* but to find  My own betrayal in their constancy,  In faith to Him their fickleness to me,  Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.  To all swift things for swiftness did I sue ;  Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.  But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,  The long savannahs of the blue;  Or whether, Thunder-driven,  They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,  Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their  feet:--    Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.  Still with unhurrying chase,  And unperturbed pace,  Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  Came on the following Feet,  And a Voice above their beat--  **"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."** | *I begged, like an outlaw*  *Beside many heart-shaped windows, with red curtains*  *With intertwined loves growing round them.*  *(For though in my head I understood that the One who*  *followed me loved me,*  *Yet I was very afraid that if I had Him I must have*  *nothing else besides Him)*  *But if one little window opened wide*  *The wind from his approach would crash it shut. ?????*  *Fear did not know how to escape the way Love knew*  *how to chase.*  *I fled across the edge of the world*  *And troubled the golden gateways of the stars ?????*  *I pounded on the bars of their tightly closed gates to beg for shelter*  *I shook the pale doors of the moon until they rang with the sweet sounds of shaking and silver chattering*  *I said the the morning, “Come quickly” and to the*  *evening, “Make haste”*  *Heap your young blossoms from the sky over me*  *To hide me from this tremendous Lover*  *Wrap your hazy veil around me so he will not see me*  *I tested all his servants but found that their faithfulness only reminded me of my own unfaithfulness*  *They were true to Him, so they betrayed me and deceived me.*  *I begged every swift thing to grant me swiftness.*  *But whether they swiftly and smoothly swept*  *The long blue plains of the sky*  *Or whether as though driven by thunder*  *They made his chariot clang across a heaven that*  *flashed with flying lightning around their plunging,*  *kicking feet*  *Fear didn’t know how to escape the way Love knew*  *how to pursue.*  ***Nothing shelters you who will not shelter Me.*** | |

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| I sought no more that after which I strayed,  In face of man or maid ;  But still within the little children's eyes  Seems something, something that replies,  *They* at least are for me, surely for me!  I turned me to them very wistfully ;  But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair  With dawning answers there,  Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.  "Come then, ye other children, Nature's -- share  With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship ;  Let me greet you lip to lip,  Let me twine with you caresses,  Wantoning  With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,  Banqueting  With her in her wind-walled palace,  Underneath her azured *(ayz ured)* dais *(day is)*,  Quaffing, *(kwofing)* as your taintless way is,  From a chalice  Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."  So it was done :  *I* in their delicate fellowship was one –  Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.  I knew all the swift importings  On the wilful face of skies ;  I knew how the clouds arise  Spumed of the wild sea-snortings;  All that's born or dies  Rose and drooped with; made them shapers  Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine ;  With them joyed and was bereaven.  I was heavy with the even,  When she lit her glimmering tapers  Round the day's dead sanctities.  I laughed in the morning's eyes.  I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,  Heaven and I wept together,  And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;  Against the red throb of its sunset-heart  I laid my own to beat,  And share commingling heat;  But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.  In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.  For ah ! we know not what each other says,  These things and I ; in sound *I* speak--  *Their* sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.  Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth ;  Never did any milk of hers once bless  My thirsting mouth.  Nigh and nigh draws the chase,  With unperturbed pace,  Deliberate speed, majestic instancy ;  And past those noised Feet  A Voice comes yet more fleet -  **Lo ! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."** | *I didn’t look in the face of a man or a woman anymore*  *To find the thing for which I had wandered away.*  *But the little children’s eyes seemed to respond to me*  *And say, “The little children are for me,*  *Surely they are mine.”*  *I turned to them with sad longing*  *But just when their eyes seemed to about to give me*  *answers, they were snatched away from me to heaven by the angel Death.*  *I turned then to Nature and said,*  *“Nature’s children, come share your delicate friendship with me!”*  *Let me kiss you and caress you*  *As we play with Mother Nature’s*  *Wild, unrestrained hair.*  *Banqueting*  *Underneath her sky-blue raised platform*  *Drinking heartily as you innocently do,*  *From a goblet*  *That drips light from the morning.*  *I became one of their delicate community*  *I unlocked Nature’s secrets*  *I knew what every change*  *On the unruly face of the sky meant.*  *I knew how the clouds rise*  *Foamed out from the wild snorting of the sea*  *I rose and drooped with everything that’s born or dies.*  *I let them shape my own moods, whether they were*  *sorrowful or divine. When they rejoiced, so did I and when they felt loss, I did too.*  *I was sorrowful with the evening*  *When she lit her glimmering candles*  *Around the day’s dead sacred rights (like a mourner*  *lighting candles at a funeral)*  *Heaven and I cried together*  *And its sweet tears of rain became salty as they mixed with my mortal ones.*  *I laid my own heart to beat*  *Against the red, beating heart of the sunset,*  *Mixing my heat with its heat*  *But that did not soothe the ache I felt.*  *Uselessly my tears fell on Heaven’s face.*  *Because, we don’t know what each other says*  *I speak in sound, but when they make sound they are*  *only moving.*  *When they actually speak, they are silent.*  *Nature, like a poor step-mother, cannot quench my*  *thirst.*  *She never filled my thirsty mouth with any milk.*  *Closer and closer draws the chase.*  *And past those sounding feet,*  *Comes a much swifter voice,*  ***Look! nothing makes you content, because you do not content yourself in me.”*** |

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| Naked I wait thy Love's uplifted stroke !  My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,  And smitten me to my knee ;  I am defenceless utterly.  I slept, methinks, and woke,  And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.  In the rash lustihead of my young powers,  I shook the pillaring hours  And pulled my life upon me ; grimed with smears,  I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years --  My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.  My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,  Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.  Yea, faileth now even dream  The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist ;  Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist  I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,  Are yielding ; cords of all too weak account  For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.  Ah ! is Thy love indeed  A weed, albeit an amaranthine (*am-uh-ran-thin)* weed,  Suffering no flowers except its own to mount ? | *Defenseless I wait for your Love’s pounding blow!*  *You have chopped my armor from me, piece by piece*  *And knocked me to my knees*  *I have no more defenses.*  *It’s as if I slept and when I woke*  *And looked around I found myself stripped in my sleep.*  *I was young and strong and foolish*  *So I shook the hours that held up my life*  *And pulled my life down on top of me*  *Now I stand, covered with dirt, in the middle of the dust*  *Of the pile of years that made up my life.*  *My crushed youth lies dead underneath the mound.*    *My days have burned, and disappeared in smoke*  *They are as quickly gone as the sun light sparkling off the*  *waves.*  *Yes, and now the dreamer cannot count on his dream,*  *And the lute-player cannot trust his lute (an early stringed*  *instrument like a guitar)*  *Even my chain of imaginings is breaking, those imaginings in which I dreamed of swinging the earth like a trinket*  *from my wrist,*  *Those cords are too weak to hold earth,*  *Because earth is over-burdened with heavy grief.*  *Ah! Is your love actually a weed,*  *Even if it is a scarlet, never-fading weed?*  *Is it a weed that allows no other flowers to grow?* |

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| Ah ! must --  Designer infinite !--  Ah ! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it ?  My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust ;  And now my heart is as a broken fount,  Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever  From the dank thoughts that shiver  Upon the sighful branches of my mind.  Such is; what is to be ?  The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind ?  I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds ;  Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds  From the hid battlements of Eternity ;  Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then  Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.  But not ere him who summoneth  I first have seen, enwound  With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned ;  His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.  Whether man's heart or life it be which yields  Thee harvest, must Thy harvest-fields  Be dunged with rotten death ?  Now of that long pursuit  Comes on at hand the bruit ;  That Voice is round me like a bursting sea :  "And is thy earth so marred,  Shattered in shard on shard ?  ***Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest me !*** | *Ah! Must—Limitless Designer!—*  *Ah! Must you burn the wood to charcoal before you can*  *write with it?*  *My freshness emptied its weak shower in the dust*  *And now my heart is a broken fountain.*  *Tears grow stale there, continually dripping down*  *From the damp thoughts that shiver*  *On the mournful branches of my mind*  *If this is what is now, what will be in the future?*  *If the fruit tastes so bitter, how will the rind taste?*  *I can guess what Time is hiding in mist:*  *But every now and again a trumpet sounds*  *From eternity’s hidden towers.*  *The mists of time open up a small space and then drift Slowly around the half-seen towers again.*  *But not before I have seen the one who is calling.*  *He is wrapped in dark purple robes, and crowned with*  *cypress*  *I know both His name and what His trumpet is saying.*  *(Oh Lord,) Whether it is a man’s heart or his life that gives*  *you a harvest,*  *Must you fertilize your harvest-fields with rotten death?*  *Now the noise of the long chase surrounds me*  *That Voice is around me like a wave breaking on the shore*  *Your earth is marred, isn’t it?*  *It is shattered, fragments and pieces breaking on each other.*  ***Look, everything runs from you, because you’re running from me!*** |

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| "Strange, piteous, futile thing !  Wherefore should any set thee love apart ?  Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said),  "And human love needs human meriting :  How hast thou merited --  Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot ?  Alack, thou knowest not  How little worthy of any love thou art !  Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,  Save Me, save only Me ?  All which I took from thee I did but take,  Not for thy harms,  But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.  All which thy child's mistake  Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home :  Rise, clasp My hand, and come !"  Halts by me that footfall :  Is my gloom, after all,  Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly ?  "Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,  I am He Whom thou seekest !  **Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest me."** | *“ Strange, pitiable, useless thing!*  *Why should anyone hold back any love for you*  *Seeing I am the only one who cares about nothing? “ He*  *said,*  *“And humans only love the people that deserve love.*  *How do you deserve love from even the lowest human?*  *It’s too bad you don’t realize*  *How little you deserve any love*  *Who will love you, (you are so unworthy)*  *Except Me, Only Me*  *I didn’t take anything from you to harm you*  *I took it so that you could search for it in my arms.*  *You think that you have lost everything, but that is a*  *childish mistake.*  *I have stored everything for you at home.*  *Stand, take my hand, and come!”*  *I hear his footstep stop beside me.*  *Is the darkness around me actually the shadow of his hand,*  *Stretched out over me, in a caress?*  *“Ah, most foolish, blindest, weakest*  *I am the One you are seeking!*  ***When you chased me away, you chased love away from you.”*** |