

Fernando Pessoa

16 — LULLABY

LULLABY

My heart is full of lazy pain
And an old English lullaby
Comes out of that mist of my brain.

Upon my lap my sovereign sits
And sucks upon my breast;
Meantime his love maintains my life
And gives my sense her rest.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

I would give all my singing trade
To be the distant English child
For whom this happy song was made.

When thou hast taken thy repast,
Repose, my babe, on me;
So may thy mother and thy nurse
Thy cradle also be.
Sing lullaby, my little boy.
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

There must have been true happiness
Near where this song was sung to small
White hands clutching a mother's dress.

I grieve that duty doth not work
All that my wishing would,
Because I would not be to thee

But in the best I should.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Oh, what a sorrow comes to me
Knowing the bitterness I have
While that child had this lullaby!

Yet as I am, and as I may,
I must and will be thine,
Though all too little for thy self
Vouchsafing to be mine,
Sing lullaby, my little boy
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

My heart aches to be able to weep.
Oh, to think of this song being sung
And the child smiling in its sleep!

Upon my lap my sovereign sits
And sucks upon my breast;
Meantime his love maintains my life
And gives my sense her rest.
Sing lullaby, my little boy.
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

I was a child too, but would now
Be the child, and no other, hearing
This song low-breathed upon its brow.

When thou hast taken thy repast,
Repose, my babe, on me;
So may thy mother and thy nurse
Thy cradle also be.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Oh, that I could return to that
Happy time that was never mine
And which I live but to regret!

I grieve that duty doth not work
All that my wishing would,
Because I would not be to thee
But in the best I should.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Ay, sing on in my soul, old voice,
So motherfully laying to sleep
The babe that quietly doth rejoice.

Yet as I am, and as I may,
I must and will be thine,
Though all too little for thy self
Vouchsafing to be mine.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Sing on and let my heart not weep
Because sometime a child could have
This song to lull him into sleep!

Yet as I am, and as I may,
I must and will be thine,
Though all too little for thy self
Vouchsafing to be mine.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Somehow, somewhere I heard this song,
I was part of the happiness
That lived its idle lines along.

Yet as I am, and as I may,
I must and will be thine,
Though all too little for thy self
Vouchsafing to be mine.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Ay, somehow, somewhere I was that
Child, and my heart lay happy asleep.
Now — oh my sad and unknown fate!

s. d.

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