

# Robert Desnos

Poems from

*The Secret Book For Youki*

Translated by Todd Sanders

*The eight poems featured here were written by Desnos in a period of two weeks in November, 1932. He bound the poetry in a handmade book (entitled The Secret Book For Youki) illustrated with gouaches he painted.*

With the dawn of a day, a throw of the dice  
he stops at the edge of the fountains of his life  
where he seeks a mirage promised to him  
he cools his head, quenches his thirst  
And pronounces this word: chérie  
which resounds through the dreams of a sleeping city  
cradling it in its last vision.  
There will not be one less day  
in his love and in yours.  
And his echoes of sleep multiply  
this word alone: chérie.

12 November 1932  
3 o'clock in the morning

With the siren queen  
there is a cabaret where I am sitting down for a meal  
this evening  
among tables empty and naked as tombs.  
Black tie waiters  
Busy around chairs without occupants:  
In their suits of ravens  
They appear to celebrate  
the marriage of solitude and night

and me I wait.

Sometimes the telephone rings and no one answers  
 and perhaps it is she at the end of the line,  
 far from here, calling me  
 but no one answers  
 and I do not know what force forbids me  
 to go over to take the receiver in my hands and say:  
 "It is me, alcohol shines in bottles  
 come, come rapidly,  
 we will drink all night if you desire it  
 If you want to sleep, you will sleep in my arms  
 while waiting for the morning of crystal dew and wet sheets  
 that fall as a wave on the city."

Over there, the house is empty  
 I run from room to room calling  
 I cry on your pillow  
 I sob your name  
 because no year passing after another year  
 will be able to distract my thought from your thought  
 my desire from your desire  
 and my mouth from your mouth.

Sheets will dirty without being crumpled  
 on the bed where you liked to sleep  
 and I, heartbroken to be alone, call your name, imagining  
 what insults you submit to  
 foul, filthy worms that destiny  
 has set upon our path.

13-11-32

incantation

Let nothing reach them nor anything separate them  
 Let nothing separate the seahorse from the siren  
 the siren from the seahorse,

120 Janus Head

Robert from Youki,  
Youki from Robert.

Let anyone who would try it  
be put to death, be punished,  
suffer a thousand evils

By their embraces and their kisses  
by their words their confidences  
their common secrets, their flesh  
and let nothing reach her but that which is  
in its beauty in its youth  
in its health in its fortune  
in its happiness and in its life  
and let them be united soon.

a dream of days passed

I love you Youki - before I even knew you I loved you -  
I waited for you - I searched for you - I will love you always -  
She is my daughter - She is my woman - I am loved the best  
She is who I alone love - We will be united soon  
my child - my chérie - my daughter - my pain - my peace -  
my joy - my luxury - my treasure.

13-11-32

youki, light of my nights

Do you remember - the nights when you appeared  
At the window of my door?  
When you rose up in the darkness of my house  
When you fell down in a heap on my bed like a great bird  
Tired of passing the oceans and the plains and the forests.  
Do you remember - your words of greeting, of salvation  
Do you remember - my words of welcome

my words of love?  
 No, you do not remember,  
 No one remembers the present, no one...  
 Now, it is night,  
 You appear, you arrive, you fall in a heap on my bed  
 I am your servant and your submissive defender obedient  
 to your law as you are to my love.  
 It is midnight it is noon  
 It is quarter past midnight  
 It is half past midnight  
 It is midnight to come or noon just passed  
 It is midday ringing  
 It is always midday ringing for my love  
 For our love  
 All sounds all sighs and your lips  
 And on my bed you fall in a heap between midnight  
 and four in the morning like a great albatross  
 Escaping storms.

27-11-32

The city formerly the city at one time the last city  
 O sky black as a widow  
 snow star tower comet ramparts  
 at Villeneuve and at Chaville  
 at Deauville and at Trouville  
 at Tancarville at Vieuville  
 The city formerly the city at one time the last city  
 A fire rises from a roof as a pigeon  
 and the rose of midnight bursts skyward  
 at Villeneuve and at Chaville  
 at Villevieille at Ville l'Évêque  
 at Melleville at Villeville  
 let the rose lose its petals  
 the leaves of the book will survive  
 The city formerly the city at one time the last city  
 The sky of the rose at midnight

And the book will open to the page where love  
resounds like a porcelain universe  
collapsing abysses in abysses  
with the sparkling of constellations  
the whiteness of the snow  
and perfumes of the grand flower gardens  
where every hour your hand will come to gather roses.

28-11-32

A funny little red fellow  
meets a funny little green fellow  
And that is what ends  
A dream of beautiful eyes  
resulting from a bouquet of worries  
And we run off and chase one another.  
We passed by here  
We will pass by there again  
And we run  
And we laugh  
None of this is a joke  
It is love it is life  
It is your beautiful eyes my darling.

1. My dear my dear my Youki
2. I love and will none but you
3. And you will love me when I call you Youki
4. Return my dear
5. Hours flow waiting for you
6. I think only of you
7. Remember your words of hope Youki
8. Do not prepare me for one more great disappointment
9. My chérie
10. You and no other than you
11. And no other than me
12. Is this not my love