

HOPE

The sun was warm that autumn morning
As Tôshal sat before his cave;
That dream he'd dreamt – was it a warning?
What was the message that it gave?
Its half remembered scenes, compounded
With hopes and fears, left him confounded.
Maybe it told that other kin
Still lived nearby? Should he begin
To seek them out? He felt so weary.
Or did the dream portend his death?
Yet *he* still lived; he still had breath.
“I'll not,” he said, “hold thoughts so dreary.
“I must not sit and brood and mope.
“I still have life; I still have hope.”

He slowly rose and stood surveying
The rock, the scrub and sea below,
While in his mind he saw there playing
The children lost so long ago.
He thought he heard his dead wife crying;
But on the breeze her words were dying –
And all was silent as before.
No children played there any more.
And lonely Tôshal stood there grieving,
Recalling joys and woes long past
Till tiredness seized his limbs at last.
So down he lay, and sleep, relieving
His weary soul and tired frame,
With gentle peace him overcame.

The sun was high when Tôshal woke up;
He blinked then closed again his eyes.
“I'll lie awhile,” he thought, “and soak up
“The pleasant warmth before I rise.”
But something made his eyes start gazing –
He saw a form in light amazing
Who stood in splendour neath the sun,
Nor by its brilliance was outdone.
“Fear not,” the apparition told him,
“For I am Hadragum the Seer,
“The ancient one whom you revere.”
Then awesome wonder did enfold him,
For he beheld o'er time's divide
The Seer who once had lived and died.

"I come," said Hadrugum, "to bid you
"Take heart and put aside your woe."
"How so?" cried Tôshal, "How? For did you
"Not leave us centuries ago
"On Solstice Eve, Oh sage of sages?"
"Indeed," the Seer replied, "and ages
"Have followed ages since I died
"And joined the spirits, where I bide.
"But 'tis the time of my foretelling
"Our race of men shall pass away
"From this world's ken. Have no dismay,
"For in the spirit realm are dwelling
"Your children, wife and kindred all.
"No pain nor ill can them befall."

"The tall men," Tôshal said, "must surely
"Have caused the death of all our kind.
"For they are swift and cunning, purely
"Malign and crooked in their mind."
"Though swift they are and full of cunning,"
The Seer replied, "and great and stunning
"Devices they will plan and build,
"Our death is not what they have willed.
"The climate's changed and times are warmer;
"The Age of Ice has passed away;
"And Summer drought means less array
"Of game to hunt – no more the former
"Abundant herds for all to share.
"Their agile skill makes game more rare."

"The tall men surely caused the warming,"
Responded Tôshal, "All was right
"Before they came and started swarming
"Across our lands; so hence our plight."
"Not yet," the Seer said, "are they able
"To change such things; the earth's not stable
"But cold and hot do ebb and flow
"In ways nor we nor they do know.
"One day their greedy exploitation
"Of earth's resources *shall* effect
"Unwonted warming and subject
"The world to stress and deprivation;
"But many centuries shall run
"Before such blight has e'en begun."

"They mayn't have caused the annual warming
"And summer drought, nor willed that we
"Should starve; maybe their outperforming
"In chase and hunt did guarantee
"We'd not survive," said Tôshal, adding:
"Yet they are evil, fell and madding."
"But no," the Seer replied. "They're men
"Like us, who good and evil ken;
"But taller are they and more agile,
"And swifter both in build and mind;
"Inventive though they be, they'll find
"That peace among themselves is fragile.
"For they will work both good and ill:
"With skill they'll cure, with skill they'll kill."

"Shall evil," Tôshal said, "for ever
"Endure? And though these men may aim
"To do great good, yet shall they never
"Forsake their quest to kill and maim?
"Are all our natures then corrupted?
"Must pain and death ne'er be disrupted?
"Must evils ever greater grow
"To match the good intents men sow?
"Is there no hope of nature's mending,
"Save at the final day of doom
"When fire shall heav'n and earth consume?
"And is this awesome day impending?
"If good and ill both in them lie,
"Why must we yield to them and die?"

"These questions round my head are thrumming,"
The Seer replied, "I cannot see
"The time the fiery doom is coming,
"For much remains still hid from me.
"But in the spirit realm I'm learning
"And bit by bit the truth discerning.
"I've learnt that there's a greater still
"Than all the spirits: One whose will
"Called all creation into being.
"And though some spirits in their pride
"Have marred His works and cast aside
"His love, the One is guaranteeing
"The marring shall be rectified
"And all shall in His love abide."

“Such wondrous news is full of merit,”
Said Tôshal, “Yet I ask again
“Why do the tall men now inherit
“The earth? Why can’t our men remain?”
“Because,” the Seer said, “earth is warmer;
“The Age of Ice has passed and former
“Abundant game is gone, so we
“Must also go. But learn from me
“A marvel past my comprehension:
“To heal all men and heal the hurt
“The marring caused – *this* I assert –
“The One shall enter our dimension.
“He as a tall man shall be born.
“That is our hope – be not forlorn!”

“To gainsay you gives me no pleasure;”
Said Tôshal, “but it cannot be
“That One who’s great beyond all measure
“Can enter something less than He.
“For how could He be held in matter?
“The universe would surely shatter!”
“You think,” replied the Seer, “in terms
“Of *measured* things, and this confirms
“Your doubts. But know the One is boundless.
“The Measureless – if so He will –
“May enter matter while He still
“Remains transcendent. Therefore groundless
“Are your concerns. Fear not! Be brave!
“Herein is hope – the hope you crave.”

The west’ring sun’s last rays were fading;
Within their light no Seer was seen;
And Tôshal sensed the dark pervading
His body; yet he felt serene.
For though beyond his understanding
The Seer had spoken, hope expanding
Within his soul now coursed right through
His very being. Joy he knew –
Far greater joy than earthly pleasure.
And through the dark he saw a light
Whose brilliance grew and shattered night.
“Oh Hope,” he cried, “my Joy, my Treasure!”
Thus Tôshal died, last of his stock,
Alone upon Gibraltar’s Rock.