

Poplar

Stalwart and stately, pride of the ancients,
Guardian of the portals of death,
Majesty and mighty to meet the fierce storm-wind,
Turning its fury to a gentle breath.

Towering fingers, all pointing upward,
In the calm twilight, becoming dim,
Radiantly royal in Spring and in Summer,
But on dark Winter nights, gruesome and grim.

Tell us your secret, ye silent wonder,
Secrets of poison and murder and hate
Romance and parties held in your gardens,
Mysterious missions, and errands of state.

Once came a maiden meeting her lover,
Ready for wooing, and making their pledge,
Then came a dagger, swift to his bosom,
For his hated rival was hid in a hedge.

Then a condottieri, waiting a messenger,
Ready to serve a neighboring count,
A poisoned potion, a corpse neath your branches,
Blood on the walk, more blood in the fount.

Warriors, merchants, high dignitaries,
Monks who were saintly, others quite sly,
You watched them come, you saw them departing,
You saw babes born, and older folks die.

Hid in your bosom, rings in your great trunk,
History is written, great or small deed
Is fixed on your consciousness, then in your being,
Who can decipher it? How can one read?

Come, oh great poplar, weave a new pattern,
Set up your mansions around a great park,
Embellish the morning with a musical greeting,
Reveal your nobility when it is dark.