1. Water Night

Night with the eyes of a horse that trembles in the night,
night with eyes of water in the field asleep
is in your eyes, a horse that trembles,
is in your eyes of secret water.

Eyes of shadow-water,
eyes of well-water,
eyes of dream-water.
Silence and solitude,
two little animals moon-led,
drink in your eyes,
drink in those waters.

If you open your eyes,
night opens, doors of musk,
the secret kingdom of the water opens
flowing from the centre of night.

And if you close your eyes,
a river fills you from within,
flows forward, darkens you:
night brings its wetness to beaches in your soul.

— trans. Muriel Rukeyser

2. Evening Prayer

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake,
or watch or weep tonight,
and give your angels charge
over those who sleep.

Tend your sick ones,
O Lord Jesus Christ;
rest your weary ones;
bless your dying ones;
soothe your suffering ones;
pity your afflicted ones;
shield your joyous ones;
and all for your love’s sake.

Amen.

— St. Augustine

3. Stars

Alone in the night on a dark hill,
with pines around me spicy and still,
and heaven full of stars over my head.

White and topaz and misty red;
Myriads with beating hearts of fire
Oh the eaons cannot vex or tire;
The dome of heaven like a great hill
and heaven full of stars.
I know I am honored
to be witness of so much majesty.

— Sara Teasdale

4. Hard Trials

Been lis’nin all de night long,
 Been lis’nin all de day,
For to hear some sinner pray.

Now ain’t dem hard trials,
Great tribulation,
 Ain’t dem hard trials,
I’m boun’ to leave dis lan’,

O, de foxes dey have holes in de groun’,
An’ de birds have nests in de air,
An’ ev’rybody has a hidin’ place,
But us poor sinners ain’t got nowhere.

Now ain’t dem hard trials,
Great tribulation,
 Ain’t dem hard trials,
I’m boun’ to leave dis lan’,

O the day dey had her on the auction block,
She’s been poking and pushed and tried,
Was de day her heart completely broke,
Was de day her heart done died.

Now ain’t dem hard trials,
Great tribulation,
 Ain’t dem hard trials,
I’m boun’ to leave dis lan’,

You may go disaway, you may go dataway,
You may from door to door,
But if you ain’t got de good Lord in yo’ soul,
O de troubles gonna find you sho’,
And de devil’s gonna trouble yo’ do’
And there ain’t no hidin’ place.

— Frederick Douglass

5. Abendlied, Op. 92, No. 3

Friedlich bekämpfen Nacht sich und Tag;
das zu dämpfen, wie das zu lösen vermag.
Der mich bedrückte, schläfst du schon, Schmerz?
Was mich beglückte, sage, was war’s doch, mein Herz?

Freude wie Kummer, fühlt ich, zerrann,
aber den Schlummer führten sie leise heran.
Und im Entschweben, immer empor,
kommt mir das Leben ganz wie ein Schlummerlied vor.

— Friedrich Hebbel

Abendlied, Op. 92, No. 3

Peacefully does night struggle with the day;
how to muffle it, how to dissolve it.
That which depressed me, are you already asleep, Pain?
That which made me happy, say, what was it, my heart?

Joy, like anguish, I feel has melted away,
but they have gently invoked slumber instead.
And as I float away, ever skyward,
it occurs to me that life is just like a lullaby.

— Friedrich Hebbel
6. Abendlied, Op. 69, No. 3
Blieb' bei uns, denn es will Abend werden; 
Und der Tag hat sich geneiget.

— Luke 24 v. 29

7. Three Nocturnes

i. Ballade to the Moon
On moonlit night I wander free, 
my mind to roam on thoughts of thee. 
With midnight darkness beckoning 
my heart t'ward mystic fantasy: 
Come and dream in me! 
How beautiful, this night in June! 
And here, upon the velvet dune, 
I weep with joy beneath the moon.
The path lies dark before my sight, 
and yet, my feet with pure delight 
trod onward through the blackened vale, 
beneath the starry sky so bright: 
O share thy light! 
These woods, their weary wanderer soon 
In awe and fearful wonder swoon; 
I weep with joy beneath the moon.
And as the darkened hours flee, 
my heart beats ever rapidly. 
Though heavy hang my eyes with sleep, 
my singing soul, it cries to thee: 
Come and sing with me! 
The twinkling sky casts forth its tune: 
O must I leave thy charms so soon? 
I weep with joy beneath the moon.

ii. Star Sonnet
In stillness high above the slumb'ring shore 
where wistful waves of foam caress the sand, 
a silent watchman o'er the darkened land, 
adrift celestial seas of twilight soars.
She passes softly in the heavens deep– 
her silver skin aglow with radiant hue, 
her enchanting globes of glittering dew, 
through rays of moonlight rich with heavenly sleep.
What dreams have I that she should give them flight, 
enlivened in a momentary flame– 
what fears of hope unfounded could she tame 
to joy, arising toward the hov'ring height!
O, Beaming Star, illumine heaven's floor 
until the sun should bear its light once more.

iii. Lullaby
Lullaby, sing lullaby, 
the day is far behind you. 
The moon sits high atop the sky, 
now let sweet slumber find you. 
The day is done, and gone the sun 
that lit the world so brightly. 
The earth's aglow with speckled show 
of twinkling stars so sprightly. 
Away, where the sunlight is beaming 
through a deep, cloudless blue, 
and the treetops are gleaming 
with a fresh morning dew; 
where the mountains are shining 
at the meadows below, 
in a brilliant white lining 
of new-fallen snow. 
Close your eyes, breathe in the night; 
a softer bed I'll make you. 
The trial is done, all danger gone; 
now let far dreaming take you. 
Away, where the ocean is lapping 
at a soft, pearly shore, 
and the swaying palms napping 
as their swinging fronds soar. 
Now the dark night approaches, 
yet so soft and so mild. 
Lullaby, sing lullaby; 
sleep now, my child.
8. Nocturnes

i. Sa Nuit d'Été
Si je pourrais avec mes mains brûlantes
fondre ton corps autour ton cœur d'amante,
ah que la nuit deviendrait transparente
le prenant pour un astre attardé
qui toujours dès le premier temps des mondes
était perdu et qui commence sa ronde
et tâtonnant de sa lumière blonde
sa première nuit, sa nuit, sa nuit d'été.

— Rainer Maria Rilke

ii. Soneto de la Noche
Cuando yo muero quiero tus manos en mis ojos:
quiero la luz y el trigo de tus manos amadas
pasar una vez más sobre mí su frescura:
sentir la suavidad que cambió mi destino.

Quiero que vivas mientras yo, dormido, te espero,
quiero que tus oídos sigan oyendo el viento,
que huelas el aroma del mar que amamos juntos
y que sigas pisando la arena que pisamos.

Quiero que lo que amo siga vivo
y a ti te amé y canté sobre todas las cosas,
por eso sigue tú floreciendo, florida,
para que alcances todo lo que mi amor to ordena,
para que se pasee mi sombra por tu pelo,
para que así conozcan la razón de mi canto.

— Pablo Neruda

iii. Sure On This Shining Night
Sure on this shining night
Of starmade shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.

The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.

Sure on this shining night
I weep for wonder
Wand’ring far alone
If shadows on the stars.

— James Agee
9. Three Winter Songs

i. A Winter Bluejay

Crisply the bright snow whisper’d,
crunching beneath our feet;
Behind us as we walked the long parkway
our shadows danced,
fantastic shapes in vivid blue.

Across the lake the skaters flew to and fro;
With sharp turns weav’ing, a frail invisible net;
In ecstasy the earth drank silver sunlight;
In ecstasy the skaters drank the wine of speed;
In ecstasy we laughed drinking the wine of love.

Had not the music sounded its highest note?
But no, for suddenly with lifted eyes you said,
“Oh, look! There on the black bough of a show-flecked maple”.
Fearless and gay as our love, bluejay cocked his crest!
Oh who can tell the range of joy, or set the bounds of beauty?

— Sara Teasdale

ii. A Winter Night

My window-pane is starred with frost,
the world is bitter cold tonight.
The moon is cruel, the wind
is like a two-edged sword to smite!

God pity all the beggars pacing to and fro.
God pity all the poor tonight,
who walk the lamp-lit streets of snow.

My room is like a bit of June,
warm and close-curtain’d fold on fold.
But somewhere like a homeless child,
my heart is crying in the cold.

— Sara Teasdale

iii. Snow Song

Fairy snow, blowing ev’rywhere;
Would that I too could fly
lightly through the air.

Like a wee crystal star
I should drift, I should blow;
Near more near, to my dear,
where he comes through the snow.

I should fly to my love
like a flake in the storm.
I should die, I should die
on his lips that are warm.

— Sara Teasdale

10. Great Day

Oh, great day, the righteous marchin’,
Oh, God’s gonna build up Zion’s walls.
This is the day of de Jubilee,
the Lord has set His people free.

Oh, great day, the righteous marchin’,
Oh, God’s gonna build up Zion’s walls.
We want no cowards in our ban’,
we call for valiant hearted men.