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Destruction

Charles Baudelairi

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And the swirling capes of matadors and dancers.
 These mingled with a rain of fire upon the cities
 Of China and modern Europe, and the ultimate flame
 Dying to embers in bombed houses; and white clouds
 Of Arctic wastes. Then at last a strip of platinum water,
 Cool as the Nile where floated Cleopatra's barge
 With purple sails; and from the West a ray like dawn.

IRMA WASSALL

DESTRUCTION

At my side, unceasingly, a Demon rests
 Or staggers like the intangible air;
 I swallow! and feel him fill my breast
 With culprit and unslaked desire.

Often, knowing my love of Art, he feigns
 The form of the most incredible of women,
 Or else, under false pretences, stains
 My lip with philtres of the sweetest poison.

Then he conducts me, far from the eye of Heaven,
 Choking with exhaustion, shattered with fever,
 Through fields of Melancholy, infinite, soundless,
 And throws in my face, full of meek confusion,
 The vilest of garments, gaping wounds,
 The bleeding apparatus of Destruction!

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
 (Translated by Charles Henri Ford)

THE ANCIENT WAYS

Always women are tending the graves.
 Old women kneel and pluck up little weeds
 With knotted hands.
 Young women walk the paths between the graves
 With heads held proudly
 But with stony eyes—

And everywhere I look are
 Uniforms.