



# The death of Keats

## i

Black umbrellas in a London street,  
gaslights, overcoats, cold wet feet.  
Rain-dark horses, cobble-stones, sleet,  
young man huddled in a carriage seat.

Feverish heart-beat, fast-pulsed wrist,  
coughing, sweating, dank grey mist.  
Hampstead, midnight, coughing in bed,  
candle-lit cotton-sheet, speck of red.

Doctors, whispers, fever in the brain,  
opium for tremors, laudanum for pain.  
Cold stone garden, bench in the sun,  
poet in a blanket, heart on the run.

Smog over London, smog in a lung,  
soot in the drizzle, soot on a tongue.  
Must keep writing, must, must hope,  
don't show beloved too ill to cope.

Lamp-lit drawing room, perfume, lace,  
damp white handkerchief, tearful face.  
Must, must travel to a healthier place,  
long last lingering frightened embrace.

Dockyard sunset, gulls and clouds,  
ship on the waters, sails like shrouds.  
Bright star, dank mist, love and fear,  
one moment poetry, the next despair.

Dark-red roses, the Spanish Steps of Rome,  
far-off pigeons fluttering round a dome.  
Small cold bedroom, narrow hard bed,  
young man coughing, gaunt pale head.

Blood in the mouth, a cry in the night,  
blue-painted ceiling fading from sight.  
Heart-pant, mind-mist, unseeing eyes,  
marble-blank eye-lids, soot-dark skies ... ..

## ii

You were an orphan, a longing on the roam,  
for far green fields, a home from home.

You'd dream of a meadow, a nightingale's song  
and wake in a vision where you could belong.  
You'd sit by a window with book and pen,  
your mind a river, a leaf-lavished glen,

dying to the din, the stench in the streets,  
living in a poem where your being still beats.

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