

# Secret Friends

*A Collection of Poetry*



**H.M. Forester**

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## *A Collection of Poetry*

by H.M. Forester

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Front cover image:  
Thomas Gainsborough, *Road from Market*.

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Poems 2 to 8 were previously published in the psi-fi novel, *Secret Friends: The Ramblings of a Madman in Search of a Soul* in 2020, under the pen name “H.M. Forester”.

Poems 9 to 13 are newly published in this book.

## 1. Soul Food



In every grain of sand  
In the palm of my right hand  
In the sleazy brothel bed  
In the lowly cattle shed  
In the slate-grey cloudy sky  
In the frown of the passer-by  
Behind the greasepaint smiles  
And the drunkard on the tiles  
In the salivating dogs of war  
In the troubadour's chansons d'amour  
Idly eyeing an opportunist fly  
Watching life passing me by  
In the heated climax of lust

In patience and in trust  
Reading between the lines  
Listening to my own whines  
In a children's fairytale  
In the morning junk mail  
In the two-bit comic's joke  
Meeting common or garden folk

– Here's food enough for every fool  
Who ever set out to find  
What it was they were looking for,  
Or what there *is* to find.

Image: *The King's Day Free Market* (Dutch: Koningsdag Vrijmarkt) in the city of Groningen.

Image author: Donald Trung Quoc Don (Chữ Hán: 徵國單).

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~ © H.M. Forester, 12 November 1990.



## 2. The Lovers' Inner Sense



Softly-spoken, sentimental words, they arise welcome yet unbidden,  
like affectionate rays of sun, through dense woodland crowns.  
Lighting up a sacred space in the undergrowth and  
glinting in the swirling, gurgling waters of the nearby brook.

A rustling in the autumn leaves draws my attention.  
“Hello, Lickle Sleepy Eyes”, she whispers, both strange yet so familiar.  
And I catch a snatch of a voice I haven’t heard for many moons,  
cooing softly: “We, too, love to be recognized and loved.”

And that subtle scent in the air – beyond the wondrous smell  
of wild garlic – the moist earth after revivifying rain.  
What’s that aptly-delightful word on the tip of my tongue?  
Ah yes! “Petrichor” comes the reminder from beyond Beyond.

I feel the warm and tender touch of breeze on my arm,  
And pause briefly on my rambling along the scrunchy gravel path,  
as a wonderful shimmer runs races up and down my spine  
and lifts the vestigial hairs on my arms and balding scalp.

I sense a gentle kiss on my ready-parted lips  
and break into a spontaneous, beaming, – even primal – grin.  
Such an intimate and moving moment cannot go un-noticed  
as it stirs old yearning buried thrice-deep within my heart.

Then my billowing white clouds roll across the hypnagogic sky  
and the sunlight abruptly leaves the enchanted clearing.  
“Alas!” In a moment, my joyful reverie is broken –  
though an unvoiced “See you tonight!” seems to linger in the air.

“Yes, yes!” I cry aloud in heated, hasty reply,  
hoping my words do not come too late. Not caring

that some passer-by might take me for a blessed lunatic.  
A benighted, and breathless, would-be escapee, no less!

“Thank you!” I exclaim, turning and jiggling on the spot.  
“Oh, yes: a thousand-and-one times ‘Yes!’”  
“A lovers’ tryst! At dead of night, the witching hour ...”  
“... and every night thereafter, until blissful reunion!”

~ © H.M. Forester, Thursday 27 August 2020.

Image: *Woodland*.

Artist: Ivan Shishkin (1832–1898).

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### 3. The Highs and Lows on the Road to Atonement



It all began long, long ago, when I fatefully put my feet up.  
Week after week I'd laboured, sprucing house from top to tail.  
I'd burnt the candle at both ends, but now I drank a cup,  
yet while my body's work was done, my mind still blew a gale.

Up, up I flew and farther still; to the dizzying heights I reached.  
Entranced by associative delight — until fright snatched hold of me.

Symbol, sign and metaphor, the flood my defences breached;  
burst and scattered far and wide, connected teardrops in a sea.

Down I tumbled through the Blessèd Tree, my Soul set all-aflame,  
and plumbed the darkest depths where dear Jung had dared to dive.  
Scared stiff at such hubris and gripped by mortal shame,  
I clung to a shred of sanity, and fought to stay alive.

The Angels' timely intervention saved me from damnation.  
They raised me up, brushed me down, and then they set me free.  
And a mystic offered help to rebuild my life's foundation.  
But for their aid, I'm sure as sure, I'd still be under lock and key.

Only now can I look back without utter wide-eyed dread,  
and learn from – even cherish – that bitter-sweet first home run.  
With joy I close my eyes and dream, and in my vision see ahead,  
Cosmos and deep Psyche's twin lives truly are as One.

I know I've erred and fallen down so many times before,  
And my well-worn coat's all patched up, and yet again unravelled.  
But every time I draw deep breath and head toward Destiny's door,  
And once again I set off, along this star-lit road less travelled.

~ © H.M. Forester, Saturday 29 August 2020.

Image: *Road from Market*.

Artist: Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788).

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## 4. Arcadia Revisited



Once upon a time, beyond place and time,  
and everywhere you cared to ramble,  
there stood a Garden no digger touched,  
nor black tarmacked road, nor death-dark mill.

If you use reason, you will be deceived  
into thinking it mere childish myth.  
But open your heart and you will sense:  
though long overgrown, it still endures.

I once met a fair maid along the lane,  
who revealed to me her dreamtime name.  
Eugenie guided me by the hand,  
and ushered me through a secret door.

In a trice I left this sad world behind  
and saw in awe and great surprise,  
that what we believe as real and true  
is a clockwork nightmare fantasy.

We think that we live and think that we love,  
though really we subsist in slumber,  
while the birds and bees and chestnut trees,  
here, set my heart all a-flutter.

Arcadia's not a place to visit:  
like water to fish, we all swim in it.  
And though in essence it's hidden deep  
It unveils to folk who truly seek it.

Though back now in this materialist world,  
as I pass along a dirt alleyway  
I catch the scent of a blossoming rose,  
and it carries me back to Arcady.

Just there! On the breeze I hear lilting tune,  
and in mind's eye see a sacred grove,  
where all the joyful folk are gathered,  
and I join the "Wassail!" and sing along.

There she stands waiting, dearest Eugenie,  
smile on her lips and toss of red hair.

Full of heart, I hasten toward her  
and, embracing, we're carried back there.

We sing and we dance and we lay on hands,  
life's miseries and woes a-healing.  
In the warmth and glow of the campfire:  
here in Remembrance, we make our home.

~ © H.M. Forester, Thursday 3 September 2020.

Image: *The Course of Empire: The Arcadian or Pastoral State.*

Artist: Thomas Cole (1801–1848).

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## 5. The Cracks in the Concrete



“I think I’m losing my mind,” I blurted out  
to the only bright-eyed person I could find  
in this fathomless sea of darkly-sunken, vacant faces.  
A sentient soul in this disenchanted land of the blind.

The old man raised an eyebrow and broadly smiled:  
“Come, sit a moment while you find calm,” he beckoned.  
“Then we’ll take a walk and leave these cares behind.”



I drew a deep breath, and then drew a second.

He shuffled along the rosewood bench to make room,  
introducing himself and asking my name:

“Glad to make your acquaintance,” Joe tipped his cap,  
a beam on his face and his eyes all a-flame.

“I’ve sat here for years, watching the world go by,”  
old Joe informed me, with a sigh and lament,  
“Not one in a hundred in the here and now.  
There or then, they are, not truly in the moment.”

“Oh! hither and thither and helter-skelter:  
armies of ants in an ant-heap making money,”  
cried old Joe, wiping a stray tear from his eye.  
“Better to be like bees, in a hive, sharing honey.”

I took a deep gulp and bade the man continue.  
“What you’re hearing and seeing now is grim reality,  
squeezed through your unregenerate distorting lens,  
and a dreadful reminder of our fallibility.”

“Beyond this superficial layer, lies a tough unsavoury husk,  
and at the moment that’s all you seem to behold.  
But please trust me when I tell you: deeper still –  
beyond – lies a kernel, a beating heart of gold.”

“Do you think I’m going mad?” I asked old Joe.  
He said nothing as we walked off down the road –  
then paused – and nodded at a drive as we passed by,  
and I turned my head, mind still on overload.

“That’s what’s happening to you,” old Joe explained.  
He pointed down the driveway, waving his arm about,  
and the deep cracks in the concrete said it all:  
this was my state – my fate – it left no room for doubt.

“Just nature’s renaissance, and pushing up roots,”  
smiled Joe, “but look there and you’ll see what I mean:”  
and there, in a crack, I saw a flower a-bloom,  
its petals vibrant orange, its slender stem jade-green.

“So, you don’t think I’m mad?” asked I, peering at him,  
and yet I wondered if this was subtle subterfuge.  
“Heaven forbid,” old Joe smiled and shook his head:  
“We just need to get you to a safe refuge.”

“Not the psyche ward! Dear God, please no!” I screamed,  
and Joe placed a calming hand on my shoulder:  
“Don’t be so quick to judge,” he gently replied –  
but deep inside I still sensed my dragon a-smoulder.

“I know a shelter a few hours’ walk from here:  
a country school where they’ll take care of your needs,  
teach you how to keep your secret tucked away,  
and how to grow a garden from those precious seeds.”

“For how long?” I asked, thrilled at this new prospect.  
“As long as it takes,” he shrugged, as we walked on.  
“Until you’re ready to return and play your role.  
Good job you found us before you were too far gone.”

“And on the way, there’s a quaint tavern I frequent,  
where we might relax over a lunch and beer,

to celebrate the joy of your first awakening,  
and give thanks that – at long last – you made it here.”

“There are so many folk around with partial solutions,  
that it’s hard to tell the horse from the cart.  
So easy to get lost in the world’s gyrations,  
and lose touch with the quiet-wisdom of the heart.”

“I’m sorry you fell through the cracks,” Joe lamented,  
“and you’ve had to struggle and suffer all alone.  
But the only important thing, in the end  
is that you made it to this major milestone.”

~ © H.M. Forester, Saturday 5 September 2020.

Background image: *Concrete driveway severely cracked and buckled by tree roots along Glen Mawr Drive in Ewing Township, Mercer County, New Jersey.*

Image author: Famartin.

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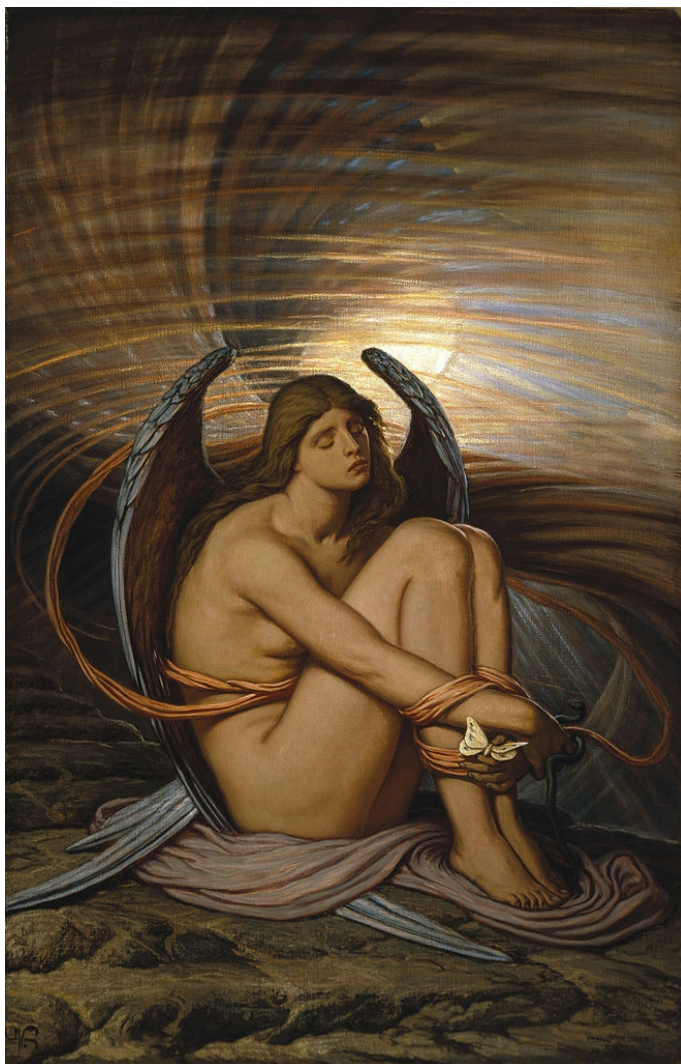
Superimposed image: *Orange gerbera flower.*

Image author: George E. Koronaios.

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## 6. Lost Soul in a Disenchanted World



I approached the regal Lady sitting before me,  
and fell to my knees, clutching at her velvet dress.  
Salty tears pressed hard behind my eyeballs and welled-up,  
and I cried out in heart-felt sorrow and distress.

“So many abandoned me for the Sky Gods,” sighed She,  
“I, who feed and nurture you and from whose womb you spring.  
Dear heart, I nurse you, protect and cherish you,  
for I’m *anima mundi* and in me you cling.”

“I hold open my door for those whose doors are shut,  
and yet you doubt me, afraid of daemons and treason.  
You bind yourself tight with chains, and you yoke yourself  
like a beast of burden to the sharp plough of Reason.”

“Why do you pretend I don’t exist, and spurn me?  
Is that what they taught you to believe and despise  
in church and school and the fad of scientism?  
It’s clear I count for nothing in materialist eyes.”

“I am a deep well of soulful intuition,  
a sacred spring of imagination and inspiration.  
A sea whose waters run deep: you swim and breathe in me,  
I bring a bountiful harvest and integration.”

“Plumb my depths and you’ll find the pearl of great price  
and riches beyond compare: I am the original mater-ial.  
Follow my scent and you’re sure to find your way;  
follow until you arrive at the essential and real.”

“I swear to you, on all that is truly holy:  
you will not suffer a molecule of loss.

Not a loss of anything that has true value,  
just glittering fool's gold, plastic tinsel, and dross."

"Look and you will see nothing; close your eyes and see;  
seek and you will find me waiting so peaceable.  
Drink deeply and I'll fill your cup with strange delight,  
And you will cry out, 'But this is so unbelievable!'"

"Don't try to force things, and they will arise naturally,  
Just as the waters flow and like flowers in May.  
Remember the sun is always shining, dear heart:  
it's our mood-laden clouds that get in our way."

"You'll find me in the sewing of a patchwork quilt;  
in the smile of a passer-by, or bitter confection;  
the light in dark depths, not some distant mountain peak;  
in love and wholeness, and street-wise imperfection."

Thus She spoke to me, and then slowly faded from sight,  
and I found myself back in my warm bed with my kin.  
"Close your eyes and dream," came Her warm, whispered breath,  
"and try to imagine this blessed cosmos within."

~ © H.M. Forester, Wednesday 23 September 2020.

Image: *Soul in Bondage*.

Artist: Elihu Vedder (1836–1923).

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## 7. Beyond the Point of No Return



For what seemed an aeon, I searched in vain  
for the fabled Ladder to the Stars.  
With so much loss and yet so little gain,  
close I came – but still, no cigars.

On I trod in the steps of Greater Men,  
with nothing but the goal in mind.  
And one mile turned to two, seven leagues to ten;

these greater men guiding the blind.

Then I stopped in my tracks one fateful day,  
beyond the Point of No Return.

I asked strangers heading the other way:  
“What do you know that I might learn?”

One lady amongst their ranks smiled at me,  
and put her hand on beating heart.  
“In there, you will find sweet freedom,” said she,  
“and learn timeless alchemical art.”

“The ego likes to think that it’s the king,  
but it’s a product of the brain.  
The Deep Self is a secret, hidden thing,  
and its destiny is to reign.”

“I’ve been to the Land of the Midnight Sun,  
and I’ve seen the Emerald Tower.  
And I know the product of One times One,  
and I’ve felt Love’s grace and power.”

“And if you’d like to taste this wine, my friend,  
then please feel free to walk our Way.  
And we’ll show you such wonders without end,  
and we will help you if you stray.”

“It’s not too late to change the drink you sup,”  
she said – something that rang a bell.  
“Listen: a ladder’s not just for climbing up,  
it is for climbing down as well.”

“You won’t find the answer in a thousand years,  
if you don’t search deep down inside.  
The Treasure’s in the mine, you see, my dears.  
Where else would Truth and Love abide?”

And with that I spun round upon my heel,  
and walked with the lady some way.  
She it was who taught me to see and feel;  
much Wisdom did herself convey.

Later, I looked back at my merry band,  
and the sight: it caused me much pain.  
The lady smiled and lightly squeezed my hand:  
“Don’t worry, we’ll all meet again.”

“I’ve been to the Land of the Midnight Sun,  
and I’ve seen the Emerald Tower.  
And I know the product of One times One,  
and I’ve felt Love’s grace and power.”

~ © H.M. Forester, Wednesday 30 September 2020.

Image: *Kozarnika cave - entrance.*

Image author: Vassia Atanassova - Spiritia.

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## 8. The Early-Morning Briefing



Eugenie breezed back into my life this morn,  
and stirred me from the most sublime slumber.

There I was floating aloft a twilit cloud,  
when – “Presto!” – my soul was jerked back down to earth.

“This is your early-morning wake-up call.  
Rise and shine and show a leg there, shipmate!  
Jump out of bed and fling the curtains wide,  
rub your sleepy eyes, and turn on the telly.”

I really could not see the point, but complied,  
and I idly flipped through the many channels.  
So, another crisis had gripped the nation;  
yet more panic buying and civil unrest.

So many lies from the political class  
in this uncaring, post-honour, post-truth era.  
Saying black is white, wrong is right, down is up,  
to advance their left brain, neo-fascist bull.

Polarisation, head-banging division,  
dissonance, energetic entanglement,  
conflict and fear-mongering, twenty-four/seven ...  
There’s only so much sentient souls can bear.

Okay, so that’s too much “Shock! Horror!” today.  
I hit the off button and fast turn away.  
Eugenie stands there, and she nods sagely.  
“Indeed,” she smiles, and claps her hand on my back.

“Behold, the folly of the world laid bare.  
Surely now you can see right through this tyranny?  
If you’ve forgotten, you’ll remember soon enough,  
when you’ve opened the sealed orders in your Heart.”

Eugenie isn't one to sweeten her words,  
let alone filter them through a meat grinder.  
She's a good friend, but she has real work to do,  
waking this reprobate from a deep sleep.

“But don't think this is going to be easy,  
the censors' raised eyebrows are the least of it.  
Someone's bound to hit the Big Red Button  
and the guards will call for reinforcements.”

What she means is instead of a single “I”,  
a squadron of simpletons live in my mind –  
each with their own myopic agenda,  
and no unified command and control.

“Think not that a civil war is raging within;  
make a declaration of independence.  
Keep a calm head and hold off the attacks –  
at least until help arrives from afar.

“You'll need a noble heart to weather this storm  
and a strong and sturdy constitution.  
But don't forget you are only one of many  
entrusted with this most important task.

“This is the Moment of Truth – right here and now –  
and there is no room for ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’ and ‘maybes’.  
Unless you are with us, we cannot help you,  
so get on board while we still have a chance.

“Take your preconceived notions and toss them aside.  
Better to lose your mind and come to your senses.



There's no room for intellectualism:  
you're here to walk the walk, not talk the talk.

"Trying to force the issue is foolish:  
that's a sure way of preventing change and growth.  
Let inner-tuition come of its own accord;  
allow things to unfold as nature intends.

"Don't set yourself impossibly high standards,  
because you will always seem a failure.  
Just set yourself reasonable goals and excel,  
and overall you will feel and fare much better.

"We've waited an age for this moment to arrive,  
and it quietly crept up on us, unawares.  
Make yourself ready to receive the Gift  
when Destiny comes knocking at your door.

"Realize this: the honeyed flow of inspiration  
doesn't come from you, but to you and through you.  
Make of your own self a noble vessel  
to store these psycho-cosmic energies.

"We represent a long chain of grail keepers:  
something attained when we become worthy within.  
But beware of unholy ego-inflation:  
what's needed is humility and dedication.

"Here's a love-cup of nectar to slake your thirst  
and fill you with fresh courage and resolve.  
Drink this blessed sustenance, but pass it round:  
thrift is theft where ambrosia is concerned.

“This is the Secret of the Hidden Economy:  
that the more you give, the more you receive.  
That’s the true nature of this bottomless purse:  
to simply give, give, give and keep on giving.

“Don’t look for peer recognition or laurels,  
breathe deep and witness your transformation.  
This is all your hopes and wildest dreams come true:  
this is it – the one true initiation.

“And now, your real work in this world may begin,  
in service to Mother Earth and humankind.  
And if anything is needed for the Work,  
it’ll arrive before you’ve even thought of it.

“Trust that the rule of Newtonian clockwork  
and scientism is coming to an end.  
Trust that the whole cosmos will support you  
in this battle for the Soul of the World.

“And look forward to the time – not far away –  
when the world enters a new Renaissance,  
casting off the threadbare Cartesian robes,  
and the good and simple joys of life hold court.”

~ © H.M. Forester, Tuesday 3, Thursday 5 November 2020.

Image: *Whisperings of Love*.

Artist: William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905).

Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

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## 9. Lines Drawn in the Sand



Oh, subtle intimations of the hidden world  
That grace our dreams by night and inspire thoughts by day,  
Every which way I turn I glimpse some deeper truth  
And yet – what use to me, if here unmoved I stay?

There's an incoming message I must deliver,  
A note to myself and "To whom it may concern",  
Things are coming to a head, more storms are brewing;  
No time for delay – nor yet to the bar adjourn.

In film, book, poetry, art, and common street talk  
Blessèd, subversive, kindred souls of secrets hint,  
Stirring the dying embers of some age-old fire  
Or striking new sparks in kindling with their sharp flint.

But fellowship and moral support won't suffice,  
Nor getting lost in the muck of sideshows,  
Whether nature, dirty business or politics:  
Whatever cause where raw emotion overflows.

Yes, we're in a deep pit; ropes short, ladders broken  
And the world is so crazy, beyond parody,  
But there's no sense in trying to shout to the world:  
I see, you see, and "Why don't they listen to me!?"

I'm not talking 'bout marching to Trafalgar Square,  
I'm not talking 'bout Twitter or In-Your-Face-Book.  
Real, lasting change can only come from within,  
Not by reading the menu, but learning to cook.

I know there's only one way out of this morass,  
Other than a pine box, with other expenses,  
And that is to break the habit of a lifetime,  
To wake to World Soul, and return to my senses.

~~~~oOo~~~~

Heed this Call as best ye may,  
Our hour of need is at-hand.  
This is all I have to say,  
Lines drawn in blood in the sand.

~ © H.M. Forester, Sunday 11 May 2021.

Image: *Writing in sand.*

Image author: Mrs Logic at Flickr.

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## 10. Okay, So. But Listen



Okay, so ...



The politician  
Is a nasti piece of work,  
And the oligarch  
Really is a callous jerk.

All the world's oceans  
Are a filthy toilet bowl,  
And the floods and fires  
Are raging out of control.

I down two cans of beer  
Oh – go on! – let's make it three,  
To wash away all  
My blues and anxiety.

I boot up my computer  
For “therapeutic shopping”  
Click, click, click the remote  
For an evening's channel hopping.

So many temptations  
For my little monkey mind,  
So many sideshows  
For me and my human kind.

I must do something;  
I'm tearing myself apart,  
To deflect me from  
The yawning void in my heart.

**But listen ...**

For here She is again,  
Whispering in my ear.  
With words of love  
And wisdom for to hear:

“The Garden's still beneath your feet,  
Though so very overgrown.  
The Secret Friends they walk the street,  
Though you may think you're all alone.

Stir, stir,  
Stir your dying ember.  
Wake, wake,  
Wake and you'll remember.

Turn, turn,  
Turn the light around.  
Sing, sing,  
Sing, let love abound.

Dance, dance,  
Dance and dance some more.  
Laugh, laugh,  
Laugh: that is the cure.

Turn, turn,  
Turn from the lure.  
The answer lies within  
And that's for sure.

Seek, seek,  
Seek and you'll be found.

Swim, swim,  
Swim or you'll be drowned.

Wipe, wipe,  
Wipe away your tears.  
And sweep, sweep,  
Sweep away your fears.

Dream, dream,  
Dream the whole night long.  
Wake, wake,  
Wake and sing our song.

Be, Be,  
Be just as you are.  
Destiny awaits  
The shining of your star.”

And listen again ...

“The Garden's still beneath your feet,  
Though so very overgrown.  
The Secret Friends they walk the street,  
Though you may think you're all alone.

Stir, stir,  
Stir your dying ember.  
Wake, wake,  
Wake and you'll remember.

Turn, turn,  
Turn the light around.

Sing, sing,  
Sing, let soul resound.

Dance, dance,  
Dance and dance some more.  
Laugh, laugh,  
Laugh, let spirit soar.

Be, Be,  
Be just as you are.  
Destiny awaits  
The shining of your star.”

~ © H.M. Forester, Sunday 25 July 2021.

Image: *Whisperings of Love*.  
Artist: William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905).  
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## 11. A Subtle Reminder



I'm burning sandalwood today,  
and its fragrance reminds me  
of the subtle realm  
ever-present behind – and beyond  
the cheap plastic façade  
and gossamer-thin veils  
we foolishly think of  
as civilisation  
and “the Real World”.

And if you listen closely,  
you will hear  
a thousand-and-one voices  
quietly whimper – or scream:  
“Please forgive me”,  
and “Let us back in” ...  
yet we so often fail to notice  
the “Welcome, friend!”  
which echoes without conditions in return.

~ © H.M. Forester, Sunday 19 September 2021.

Image: *Smoke from incense sticks.*

Image author: ਮਨਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ.

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## 12. The Winds of Change in the Twilit Hours



The winds of change  
are blowing a gale,  
rattling my old sash window frame,  
and a draft is sneaking past  
the sleepy door snake  
guarding my humble parlour.

A wayward leaf,  
its short life spent,  
flutters against the window pane —  
a timely reminder that  
like most things in this life,  
this sojourn, too, shall pass.

In the touch of the air on my skin  
and in the strange — yet somehow familiar —  
smell of freshly turned earth,  
I sense the call of my beloved  
Heartland, beckoning to me; whispering,  
like Rumi: “Come, come, whoever you are.”

Perhaps if I were younger  
I'd pull on my coat and scarf  
and set out to meet my fate.  
Instead, I put on another log  
and curl up by the hearth  
to finish another page in my storybook.

I've arrived at the age, you see,  
when little is guaranteed any more,  
and so at the end of each day  
I like to tie up any loose ends  
in case my feeble grip on life is lost  
and I don't awaken again with the new dawn.

“Once upon a time,” I'd begun, long ago,  
“not a thousand miles from here ...”  
Those words — about the young fool —  
this old fool knows by heart.



But as for the elusive “happily ever after”,  
that is an ever more distant borrowed promise.

“Hope is born of lack of hope,”  
a quiet inner voice reminds me,  
adding: “Intense hope leads easily to fear  
that the hope may not be realised.”  
On that note, the pen slips from my fingers  
and I drift off toward the Land of Nod.

Blessèd Eugenie is waiting for me there  
as I cross the narrow Cinvat bridge.  
“You are not an old fool,” my Fravarti insists,  
clearly privy to my deepest, darkest thoughts.  
“And for you, real life has only just begun,”  
she gently chides me, as she leads me on.

~ © H.M. Forester, Thursday 23 September 2021.

Image: *Autumn Leaves*.

Image author: Masaki Ikeda (Wikimedia user 池田正樹)

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## 13. Seeking After the Secret Friends

### An Ode to Sakina



So, you want to parlez with the Friends,  
But you've had little luck so far.  
You've searched the world and all its ends  
And – though close – you've earned no cigar.

And at length you've landed at some door  
And ask, not wishing to offend:  
“I'm sorry to be such a boor,  
I'm looking for a Secret Friend.”

This hostess knows well, but dare not say,  
Sensing much rust in your coffers.  
But 'fore she sends you on your way  
Words of sage advice she proffers:

“Despite what they say, truth isn't “out there”,  
It's closer than your jugular's found.  
Whatever you're chasing, I do swear:  
You need to turn your self around.

You won't find Friends in the Yellow Pages  
Nor anywhere on Google Maps.  
Through the ages, saints and sages  
Have concealed themselves in life's gaps.

You see, you'll find them on the inner net,  
Not on the world wide web, my dear.  
Not to say you won't meet them yet,  
Just that your essence must be clear.

So please put down your precious mobile phone  
And cast aside all care and doubt.  
Get ready to have your mind blown  
And your whole world turned inside out.

They'd like to have you with them on the team  
So they can keep you in the loop,

But you may not be what you seem;  
You may be someone else's dupe.

You may be compromised or impeded,  
With your Self buried deep inside.  
So, much self-work may be needed  
Before the truth it will abide.

You see, truth is not something given,  
But rather it's a gift received.  
And while you are ego-driven,  
It is not easily perceived.

My advice would be to give up your quest,  
Go home instead, and search within.  
You've tried all else, now try the best:  
It's here and now you must begin.

So, go home and sit down with hands on knee,  
Relax your body, still your mind.  
Pray that the Friends will hear your plea  
And restore insight to the blind.

Just enter into quiet dialogues  
As you'd charm a bird from a tree.  
So as not to wake the watchdogs,  
Keep your conversation low-key.

Begin with patience and develop trust,  
Don't rush the process, let things arise.  
Slowly to the climate adjust,  
But be prepared for a surprise.

They may arrange a midnight prison break  
To free you from your confinement.  
And subject you to much heartache  
In a process of refinement.

When you are ready, willing and able,  
Rest assured the Friends will find you.  
They'll lay their cards on the table,  
And enlist you into the crew.

Much could be spoken; more I cannot speak,  
Lest secrets spread through careless pride.  
Spirit willing, but flesh still weak,  
Chinese whispers spread far and wide.

And in later years you'll look back and see,  
There's deep wisdom in this, for sure.  
That this – if any – was the key  
That led you through the Friends' side door.

~ © H.M. Forester, Friday 24 September 2021.

## **Notes**

Baraka: A gift, a blessing.  
Parlez: Speak (French, pron. par-lay).  
Sakīna: Peace, stillness, serenity, tranquility, indwelling presence. See also: Shekhinah and Itmi'nan.

## **Image**

Image: *English Limestone Cottage with Garden in full bloom.*  
Image author: F. D. Richards from Clinton, MI.

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*The End  
of the Beginning.*