

# Il Penseroso By John Milton

Hence vain deluding Joys,  
The brood of Folly without father bred,  
How little you bested,  
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys;  
Dwell in some idle brain,  
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,  
As thick and numberless  
As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,  
Or likest hovering dreams,  
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.  
But hail thou goddess, sage and holy,  
Hail divinest Melancholy,  
Whose saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the sense of human sight;  
And therefore to our weaker view,  
O'er-laid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;  
Black, but such as in esteem,  
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,  
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove  
To set her beauty's praise above  
The sea nymphs, and their powers offended.  
Yet thou art higher far descended,  
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore,  
To solitary Saturn bore;  
His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,

Such mixture was not held a stain)  
Oft in glimmering bow'rs and glades  
He met her, and in secret shades  
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
While yet there was no fear of Jove.  
Come pensive nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, stedfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestic train,  
And sable stole of cypress lawn,  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
With ev'n step, and musing gait,  
And looks commercing with the skies,  
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:  
There held in holy passion still,  
Forget thyself to marble, till  
With a sad leaden downward cast,  
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.  
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,  
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
And hears the Muses in a ring,  
Aye round about Jove's altar sing.  
And add to these retired Leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;  
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,  
The cherub Contemplation;

And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less Philomel will deign a song,  
In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,  
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,  
Gently o'er th' accustom'd oak.  
Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy!  
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among,  
I woo to hear thy even-song;  
And missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
To behold the wand'ring Moon,  
Riding near her highest noon,  
Like one that had been led astray  
Through the heav'ns wide pathless way;  
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
Oft on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-water'd shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar;  
Or if the air will not permit,  
Some still removed place will fit,  
Where glowing embers through the room  
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,  
Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the cricket on the hearth,  
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,  
To bless the doors from nightly harm.

Or let my lamp at midnight hour,  
Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,  
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,  
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere  
The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
What worlds, or what vast regions hold  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook:  
And of those dæmons that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With planet, or with element.  
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes', or Pelop's line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine,  
Or what (though rare) of later age,  
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.  
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power  
Might raise Musæus from his bower,  
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
Such notes as, warbled to the string,  
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,  
And made Hell grant what love did seek.  
Or call up him that left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,  
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
And who had Canace to wife,  
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,  
And of the wond'rous horse of brass,

On which the Tartar king did ride;  
And if aught else, great bards beside,  
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
Of tourneys and of trophies hung,  
Of forests, and enchantments drear,  
Where more is meant than meets the ear.  
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,  
Till civil-suited Morn appear,  
Not trick'd and frounc'd as she was wont,  
With the Attic boy to hunt,  
But kerchief'd in a comely cloud,  
While rocking winds are piping loud,  
Or usher'd with a shower still,  
When the gust hath blown his fill,  
Ending on the rustling leaves,  
With minute-drops from off the eaves.  
And when the Sun begins to fling  
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring  
To arched walks of twilight groves,  
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves,  
Of pine, or monumental oak,  
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,  
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,  
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.  
There in close covert by some brook,  
Where no profaner eye may look,  
Hide me from Day's garish eye,  
While the bee with honied thigh,  
That at her flow'ry work doth sing,  
And the waters murmuring

With such consort as they keep,  
Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep;  
And let some strange mysterious dream,  
Wave at his wings, in airy stream  
Of lively portraiture display'd,  
Softly on my eye-lids laid.

And as I wake, sweet music breathe  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
Or th' unseen Genius of the wood.

But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
And love the high embowed roof,  
With antique pillars massy proof,  
And storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light.  
There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full-voic'd quire below,  
In service high, and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.  
And may at last my weary age  
Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
Where I may sit and rightly spell  
Of every star that Heav'n doth shew,

And every herb that sips the dew;  
Till old experience do attain  
To something like prophetic strain.  
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,  
And I with thee will choose to live.