



She called her mother to her, to confide
In her the secrets that she'd sought to hide.
She said: "How is it that a suckling doe
Drinks poison in her milk, and doesn't know?
I lie here, waiting to depart; don't speak
Too harshly to me, I'm worn out and weak.
This is not love but grief, this is not life
But agony and soul-destroying strife;
I've suffered secretly so much that I
Know that my heart is ready now to die.
If as my soul is leaving me, I say
Secrets that I've kept hidden till today,
If I draw back that final veil, you'll know
I'm setting out for where I have to go.
Now place your hand upon my neck, and bless
My parting as I wish you happiness;
Know as my soul's released that I depart
Because my friend and I've been forced apart.
Dress me in death: prepare me kohl from earth
He's trodden on, for it's of unmatched worth,
Mine all his woe, and sprinkle on my head
As rosewater the copious tears he's shed,
And scatter fragrant camphor, with cold sighs,
Where that poor yellow flower,¹ my body, lies;
See that my shroud is soaked in blood since I've
Died as a martyr while I was alive –
Adorn me as a bride, my veil will be
My grave's earth as it's scattered over me.

“And when my wanderer knows the details of
How I have wandered from this earth for love,
He’ll come, I know, to where my body lies
To greet me, and to mourn with tears and sighs.
He’ll sit beside my grave and, unresigned,
He’ll seek the moon but earth is all he’ll find;
Beside my earth that lonely earth will mourn,
Filled with regret now, wretched and forlorn,
My love, who is so strange, and who will be
A strange memento for your heart of me.
By God, I pray you, see you treat him kindly,
Don’t rush to blame him, don’t condemn him blindly –
There’s no one like him; seek him out, relate
My story to him, and my final fate.
I loved him well, I cherished him, may you
Like me, for my sake, love my lover too;
Tell him, ‘As Layli broke free from the chain
That tethers us to this brief world of pain,
Your love was all she thought of as she gave
Her soul to heaven, her body to the grave.
She said her love for you was pure and true,
Her soul sought love, and love was all she knew.
What should we say? Love for you filled her mind
As she set out, and left this world behind;
While she was in the world her thoughts were all
Of you, and you were all she could recall,
And as she died, it was those thoughts she bore
To be her heavenly food for evermore,
And even now, within the earth, she longs
To be with you again, where she belongs.
Like men who watch the road, she waits for when
She’ll see you as you come to her again,
She waits and turns and paces and looks back

To see you coming on that heavenly track,
And tell him that I said with my last breath,
'O you who are my soul and my soul's death,
From now on look at no one else, unless
It's with God's unalloyed kindheartedness;
Look at how wrong you were to think of you,
Your self, so that this "you" was all you knew!
So that for all your shrewdness you became
Mad in yourself, your life, and in your name!"

Tears wet her eyes now, and she turned her face
To start her journey to another place;²
She'd told the secrets that she'd tried to hide –
She'd sought her soul, and gave her soul, and died.
Her mother saw the bride depart, and she
Knew Judgment Day then, and eternity.
She tore her head-scarf off, and let her hair,
As white as jasmine, stream out in the air;
Grieving, she held her child in her embrace
And wept above her lovely hair and face,