Porphyria's Lover

By Robert Browning

The rain set early in to-night,

       The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

       And did its worst to vex the lake:

       I listened with heart fit to break.

 When glided in Porphyria; straight

       She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneeled and made the cheerless grate

       Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;

       Which done, she rose, and from her form

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,

       And laid her soiled gloves by, untied

Her hat and let the damp hair fall,

       And, last, she sat down by my side

       And called me. When no voice replied,

She put my arm about her waist,

       And made her smooth white shoulder bare,

And all her yellow hair displaced,

       And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,

       And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,

Murmuring how she loved me — she

       Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,

To set its struggling passion free

       From pride, and vainer ties dissever,

       And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,

       Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale

       For love of her, and all in vain:

       So, she was come through wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes

       Happy and proud; at last I knew

Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

       Made my heart swell, and still it grew

   While I debated what to do.

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,

       Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair

       In one long yellow string I wound

       Three times her little throat around,

And strangled her. No pain felt she;

       I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,

       I warily oped her lids: again

       Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

And I untightened next the tress

       About her neck; her cheek once more

Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:

       I propped her head up as before,

       Only, this time my shoulder bore

Her head, which droops upon it still:

       The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

       That all it scorned at once is fled,

       And I, its love, am gained instead!

Porphyria's love: she guessed not how

       Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

       And all night long we have not stirred,

       And yet God has not said a word!