

Three Sonnets from Petrarch's *Canzoniere*

by [A. M. Juster](#) in the [November 2022](#) issue

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Regrettably, my final happy day
(in this brief life my count of these is low . . .),
arrived and changed my heart to melting snow,
perhaps a sign of sadness and dismay.

Like one with tertian fever on the way
as muscles, pulse, and introspection slow,
I felt that way too, though I didn't know
my shameful wealth would waste away.

Her gorgeous eyes in Heaven, glad and bright
where light is streaming life and its salvation,
which leave my eyes with poor and wretched sight,

told mine with freakish, pure illumination:
"Peace be with you, dear friends, we'll reunite—
not here, but in a different location."

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Go, grieving verses, to hard masonry
that buries my dear treasure; once there cry
out for one who responds out of the sky,
though dark and low her mortal part will be.

Tell her that life already wearies me
of sailing through grim waves, and yet to tie
up all her scattered leaves, I stay nearby,
and step by step I follow doggedly.

I only talk of her, living and dead
(indeed, now made immortal and alive),
to make her one the world will know and love.

Allow my passing, which is just ahead,
to please her, and may she call, arrive,
and lift me up to what she is above.

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Death dimmed the sun that dazzled brilliantly;
my eyes, intact and healthy, are in shade.
She is now dust who made me flame and fade;
like elms or oaks my laurels wilt for me,

so that I see my goal, though agony
remains. No one else made my thoughts afraid
and bold, nor chilled and scorched them, nor conveyed
full hope, nor flooded them with misery.

Released by one who jabs and mollifies,
who tortured me for many years before,
my freedom's bittersweet, I realize,

and to the Lord I thank and I adore,
whose eyes sustain and oversee the skies,
I turn—world-weary, not desiring more.