

**Song of the Earth**  
Song Cycle by Gustav Mahler  
Poetry by Hans Bethge  
Original language: Das Lied von der Erde

**1. Drinking song of the misery of the earth**

The wine is already beckoning in the golden goblet,  
but do not drink yet - first, I will sing you a song!  
The song of sorrow shall resound  
laughingly in your soul. When sorrow draws near,  
the gardens of the soul will lie desolate,  
wilting; joy and song will die.  
Dark is life, dark is death.  
[Your cellar is full of golden wine!]  
Lord of this house!  
Your cellar is full of golden wine!  
Here, this lute I call my own!  
Strumming on the lute and emptying glasses -  
these are the things that go together.  
A full glass of wine at the proper moment  
is worth more than all the riches of the world!  
Dark is life, dark is death.  
The heavens are forever blue and the earth  
Will stand firm for a long time and bloom in spring.  
But you, Man, how long will you live then?  
Not a hundred years are you allowed to enjoy  
in all the rotten triviality of this earth!  
Look down there!  
In the moonlight, on the graves crouch  
crouches a wild, ghostly figure - It is an ape!  
Hear how its howls resound piercingly  
in the sweet fragrance of life!  
Now take the wine! Now is the time - enjoy!  
Empty the golden goblet to the bottom!  
Dark is life, dark is death!

## 2. The solitary one in autumn

Blue autumn mists undulate over the lake;  
the grass is standing stiff with frost;  
One might think an artist had strewn jade dust  
over all the fine blossoms.  
The sweet fragrance of flowers has flown away;  
a cold wind forces them to bow their stems low.  
Soon the wilted golden leaves  
of lotus flowers will drift upon the water.  
My heart is weary. My small lamp  
has gone out with a splutter;  
it reminds me of sleep.  
I am coming to you, comfort place of rest!  
Yes, give me rest - I have  
need of rejuvenation.  
I weep much in my solitude.  
The autumn in my heart has lasted too long.  
Sun of love, will you never shine again,  
gently to dry my bitter tears?

### 3. Of youth

In the middle of the small pool  
stands a pavilion of green  
and white porcelain.  
Like the back of a tiger  
the jade bridge arches  
across toward the pavilion.  
In the small house sit friends,  
beautifully dressed  
- drinking, chatting;  
many are writing verses down.  
Their silk sleeves slide  
backwards, their silk caps  
sit jauntily on the backs of their necks.  
On the small pool's still  
surface, all things are reflected  
wonderfully in reverse.  
Everything is standing on its head  
in the pavilion of green  
and white porcelain.  
The bridge stands like a half-moon,  
its arch inverted. Friends,  
beautifully dressed, are drinking and chatting.

#### 4. Of beauty

Young maidens pick flowers,  
pick lotus flowers at the edge of the shore.  
Among bushes and leaves they sit,  
Gathering blossoms in their laps and calling  
to one another teasingly.  
Golden sunlight weaves among the figures,  
mirroring them in the shiny water.  
The sun reflects their slender limbs,  
their sweet eyes,  
and the zephyr lifts caressingly  
the fabric of their sleeves, wafting the magic  
of their fragrance through the air.  
O see the handsome young men galloping  
there along the shore on their lively horses,  
glittering like sunbeams;  
already among the branches of the green willows,  
the fresh-faced young men are approaching!  
The trotting horse of one whinnies merrily  
and shies and canters away;  
over flowers and grass, hooves are flying,  
trampling up a storm of fallen blossoms.  
Ah, how wildly its mane flutters,  
how hotly its nostrils flare!  
The golden sun weaves among the figures,  
mirroring them in the shiny water.  
And the fairest of the young women sends  
a long, yearning gaze after him.  
Her proud appearance is only a pretense.  
In the flash of her large eyes,  
in the darkness of her ardent glance,  
the agitation of her heart leaps after him, lamenting.

## 5. The drunkard in Spring

If life is only a dream,  
why then the misery and torment?  
I drink until I can drink no more,  
the whole, dear day!  
And when I can drink no more,  
because my stomach and soul are full,  
I stagger to my door  
and sleep very well!  
What do I hear when I awake? Listen!  
A bird singing in the tree.  
I ask him whether it is spring -  
it's like a dream to me.  
The bird twitters, "Yes! Spring  
is here, it has come over night!"  
With deep concentration I listen,  
and the bird sings and laughs!  
I fill my goblet afresh  
and drain it to the bottom  
and sing, until the moon shines  
in the dark firmament!  
And when I can sing no more,  
I fall asleep again,  
for what does Spring mean to me?  
Let me be drunk!

## 6. The farewell

The sun departs behind the mountains.  
In all the valleys, evening descends  
with its cooling shadows.  
O look! Like a silver boat,  
the moon floats on the blue sky-lake above.  
I feel the fine wind wafting  
behind the dark spruce.  
The brook sings loudly through the darkness.  
The flowers stand out palely in the twilight.  
The earth breathes, full of peace and sleep,  
and all yearning wishes to dream now.  
Weary men go home,  
to learn in sleep  
forgotten happiness and youth.  
The birds crouch silently in their branches.  
The world is asleep!  
It blows coolly in the shadows of my spruce.  
I stand here and wait for my friend;  
I wait to bid him a last farewell.  
I yearn, my friend, at your side  
to enjoy the beauty of this evening.  
Where do you tarry? You leave me alone for so long!  
I wander up and down with my lute,  
on paths swelling with soft grass.  
O beauty! O eternal love - eternal, love-intoxicated  
world!  
He dismounted and handed him the drink  
of parting. He asked him where  
he would go, and also why it must be.  
He spoke, his voice was choked: My friend,  
on this earth, fortune has not been kind to me!  
Where do I go? I will go, wander in the mountains.  
I seek peace for my lonely heart.  
I wander to find my  
homeland, my home.  
I will never stray to foreign lands.  
Quiet is my heart, waiting for its hour!  
The dear earth everywhere  
blooms in spring and grows green  
afresh! Everywhere and eternally,  
distant places have blue skies!  
Eternally... eternally...