

The Exchange

Flowers of laughter, she brought, and I
the fruits of suffering's monsoon piled in the basket,
And I said to her, 'If we do an exchange,
tell me who will be the loser!'
The beauty laughed, mightily amused,
and said, 'come, let's do it!'
Have my flower chain. Let me take your fruit
filled with the juice of tears.'
I looked at her face, and right enough
a belle dame sans merci she was.

She picked up my basket of fruit, left and clapped,
mightily amused.
I took her garland flowers,
pressed it into my breast.
Mine's the victory!' She cried, and never stop laughing
as she scampered off.
The sun, he meanwhile clambered to the zenith
to burn the earth.
The hot day ended. In the evening I discovered
that all my flowers had perished.

(On board the Giulio Cesare, 17 January 1925)