In the Forest

Hail to thee, my curly acquaintance!
Receive me beneath the shade of your oaks,
Which have spread their majestic canopy
Over the smooth expanse of bright waters and the greenery of meadows.

How I thirsted, tormented by melancholy,
Burning in a slow sickness as in fire,
To drink deep of your coolness in silence
And lie down on the grass with my burning head!

How often in the oppressive silence of nights,
In hours of weary wakefulness,
I recalled your darkness, and the music of voices,
And the birds' cheerful whistling and song,
And days long past, when I left my dull home,
An unsociable child,
And wandered silently in your twilight,
Stirred by an inexpressible dream!

Oh, how beautiful you were in the evening,
When you were instantly illuminated by lightning
And suddenly answered the voice of the thunder-cloud
With a riotous whistle!

And it was dear to me!.. As with a kindred spirit,
I shared everything with you openly:
Both bitter tears and fleeting joy,
And songs composed beneath your murmur.

You, mighty one, have not been changed by the years!..
But I, your guest, have grown manly with the years,
Yet in the flame of passions, amid petty hardships,
I have tasted much heavy bitterness...

Terrible is this poison! It does not kill at once,
Does not strike like heavenly thunder:
It dries the brain, penetrates the joints,
Burns the body with slow fire!

Whether I fall struck by this poison,
Having lost the strength of my powers and the modest gift of songs,
Or come to know the light and fervor of new thoughts and feelings,
Tempered in the furnace of sorrow—
God knows what lies ahead! Now, half-sick,
I again enter beneath your shade, gloomy forest,
And listen to your friendly murmur,
To you I confide my sorrow, as to a friend!..