



At this the angels hide  
Their proud heads, mortified; 30  
    Being deep in love with Janet  
And jealous, too, for Alexander's pride.

Queen Janet softly goes  
Treading on her tip toes  
    To the bright table head; 35  
She lays before her man a damask rose.

'Is it still your desire  
To shiver at my fire?  
    Then come now, Alexander,  
Or stay and be a monk, or else a friar.' 40

'My lambkin, my sweet,  
I have dined on angels' meat,  
    And in you I had trusted  
To attend their call and make my joy complete.'

'Do you come? Do you stay? 45  
Alexander, say!  
    For if you will not come  
This gift rose I must surely snatch away.'

'Janet, how can I come?  
Eat only a crumb 50  
    Of bread, essay this wine!  
In God's name sit beside me; or be dumb.'

Her back Janet turns,  
Dumbly she spurns  
    The red rose with her shoe; 55  
But in each cheek another red rose burns.

The twelve angels, alas,  
Are brought to a sad pass:  
    Their lucent plumage pales,  
Their glittering sapphire eyes go dull as glass. 60

Now Alexander's soul

Flies up from the brain hole,  
    To circle like a bat  
Above his body threshing past control.

It was Queen Janet's power  
Turned the sweet wine sour,  
    Shrivelled the apples' bloom,  
And the bread crumbled into dusty flour.

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*1958*

(From *Robert Graves: Complete Poems*. Ed. Beryl Graves  
and Dunstan Ward. Vol. 2. Manchester: Carcanet Pr.,  
1997)