

## Giselheer the tiger

Jungles sneak across your face.

Oh, how you are!

How sweet your tiger eyes have become

From the sun.

I'm always carrying you around

Between my teeth.

You my book on the American Indian,

Wild West,

Sioux Chief!

In the twilight I languish

Tied to the trunk of a boxwood tree -

I can't exist anymore

Without the scalp game.

Red kisses paint your knives

On my chest -

Until my hair flits on your belt.

*Translation: Marc von Henning*

*Original: Giselheer der Tiger*

## Love

In sleep we feel  
The silken flow,  
The rush that's throbbing  
In us both.

And as I ride  
Your breath, I know  
Old fairy tales  
And magic prose.

Although my thorny  
Smile says no,  
We'll struggle  
Where the planets go.

In sleep we feel  
The silken flow,  
A dream and blessing  
To us both.

*Adapted from the German of Else Lasker-Schüler by  
William Myron Davis. Title of original: Die Liebe.*

## I Love You

I love you

And find you

Before the light of day.

All my life

I've known it's right

To roam or go my way.

I love you!

I love you!

I love you!

Even if

You're deaf or blind,

The clouds

May drift away.

But we're made

Of golden dust

And have the guts

To stay!

*Adapted from the German of Else Lasker-Schüler*

*by William Myron Davis. Title of original: Ich liebe dich.*

## In My Lap

Dark clouds

Are dozing in my lap.

And I'm so sad, dear man.

My lips

Are birds of paradise

Trumpeting your name.

My garden's full of sleepy trees.

My window shows

A flower.

I ride a vulture

Through the air.

It drops me at your door.

My fingers linger on your hips.

I'm mirrored

In your light.

Don't put out my candle heart.

You always do things

Right.

*From the German of Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis. Title of original: In meinem Schosse.*

## Devotion

I look beyond the sweep of stars

To where the mist is blue.

And as I float above the world

I clear the stars and moon.

I ask myself why I was shy

Or born or even died

Or why I wore a dress of doubt

When I was clocked by time.

Or when I thought I won the world

I lost it every time.

*Adapted from the German of Else Lasker-Schüler by William*

*Myron Davis. Title of original: Hingabe.*

## I Edge Towards Love

I edge towards love through morning light.

I've been forgotten.

You were right.

I know my start,

But not myself.

I heard my sigh in song.

In your smile's eternity

Your love song is our melody

Rising to the sky.

*From the German of Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis. Title of  
original: Ich säume.*

## Nightfall

Breathe on my frosty heart.

And when you hear it sing,

Don't forget: it's spring.

An icy spirit heaps

Hemlock at my feet.

A tearful angel carves

Graffiti

On the stars.

*Adapted from the German  
of Else Lasker-Schüler by  
William Myron Davis. Title of  
original: Abend.*

## **I Have a Gentle Dream of You**

Painful colors come at dawn

Resembling your soul.

And every time I think of you,

Sad eyes light up and glow.

I told you of the galaxies.

You looked at earth below.

Nights keep sprouting in my head.

Where am I to go?

I have a gentle dream of you.

My eyes are veiled with snow.

Where's the earth around me gone?

Tell me if you know.

*From the German of Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis. Title of  
original: Ich träume so leise von dir.*

## Black Stars

Why do you seek me out at night  
In clouds of hate on evil stars?  
Leave me alone to fight my ghosts.

They shoot past on vultures' wings  
From long lost, half-wild places,  
Like arctic winds in spring.

And you forget the gardens of the sun,  
Hypnotized by gloom.  
Why second-guess my grief?

*Translated from the German of  
Else Lasker-Schüler by William  
Myron Davis. Title of original:  
Schwarze Sterne.*

## My Song

Night's sleepy leaf is falling,

Oh silent, darkest wood.

Light and sky together.

Will today be good?

Anywhere I go,

I hear a darker wood.

And in my heart, a song,

A playful, rushing brook.

*Adapted from the German of Else*

*Lasker-Schüler by William Myron*

*Davis. Title of original: Mein Lied.*

## Commemoration Day

The tides rush thundering ashore,

Urged on by waterfalls above.

A candle flickers in my hand.

I miss dear Mother so.

My womb is buried in cool sand.

And from this life my soul is loath to go

So far from all I know.

I wish I had a shell-dress for my soul,

An exile for my body I could sew.

I got it from dear Mother as a pledge.

And tiptoe off, looking for my soul.

It nested on my red stone wall

Yet in my eyes, delusion hardly shows.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Gedenktage.*

# The Mommy Baboon Sings Her Baby to Sleep

## (Lullaby)

Sleep, sleep,

My pink tush ape,

My sugar louse,

My flea-bit grape.

Bright and early the Empress will come

With chocolates from China,

Sweet bonbons and rum.

Hurry up now,

Let's beg with our paws,

Or else the good goodies

Won't land in our jaws.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Die Pavianmutter*

*Singt Ihr Paviänchen in den Schlaf.*

## Only You

The crescent moon

Is in the clouds.

The moon has

One hand free.

And when I do its will,

The storm's

A shoreless sea.

And since you like

The shell I wear,

My heart lights up in me.

And when my heart

Becomes the world,

I hear the ocean sea.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: Nur dich.*

## The Tears You Shed in Prayer

The tears you shed in prayer

Transform your face

And rise up to God

In your smile,

Plucked by an angel

From the corners of your mouth.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler,*

*Translated by William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Die Träne, die du beim Gebete weinst.*

## Mother

A white star sings a death song  
In the July night,  
Like a death knell in the July night.  
And the cloud hand on the roof,  
The striped, sweaty shadow hand  
Seeks my mother.  
I feel my bare life,  
Rejection from my country,  
My life was never so bare.

As if I faded  
At day's end  
As I stand  
Between nights  
Alone.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by William Myron Davis*

*Title of original: Mutter.*

## Eternal Nights

I sit so alone at night

At my table, the color of life,

That the swirling grain

Looks like scar blood from a vein.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: Ewige Nächte.*

## Immortal

My love for you's so great,  
It's more than love or hate.  
I want to see you glow  
Like a jewel set in my soul.  
Let your dream in gold enclosed  
Find a garden of repose  
Wet with sweet Greek wine  
And scents of oil of rose.

Like a nesting bird I flew  
Through sea winds, wastelands, too,  
Across the sun by day,  
And through the stars by night.  
Spread your wings at will  
Where age is held at bay  
And, green, we'll coil round death  
Till death comes back to life.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by*

*William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Ἀθάνατοι*

## A Tick Tock Song for Paulie

My hammer, my room,

Bang, bang, boom, boom.

Bang, bang, boom, boom.

My beetle, my nap,

Boom, boom, tap, tap,

Boom, boom, tap, tap.

My clock ticks, my door tocks.

Tick tock, tick tock.

Knock, knock, tick tock.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by*

*William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original:*

*Ein Ticktackliedchen für Paulchen.*

## Ruth

And you seek me beside the hedges.

I hear your steps sigh

And my eyes are hard drops.

Your looks bloom sweetly in my soul

And blossom

When my eyes go walking in my sleep.

At the town well

There's an angel

Who sings my love song,

Who sings the song of Ruth.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by William Myron Davis.*

## **An Old Tibetan Carpet**

In the strands of an old carpet

Your soul blends into mine.

Each strand of loving color

Weaves stars across the sky.

The quiet of our footsteps

Nets riches far and wide.

How long will your sweet kisses

Engulf these lips of mine

Knotting musky blushes

Across the cheeks of time?

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: Ein alter Tibetteppich.*

## Palm Song

Oh, my love,  
Your face is my palm garden,  
Your eyes, cool ripples  
Dancing on the Nile.

Your face is every magic  
Image in my blood,  
Mirroring the night.

Your lips, in parting  
Compromise my bliss.

When you're near, I tremble  
And fear I'll lose my soul.

Your burning kisses  
Spin me like a top  
Deep in heaven's heart.

Oh, my love!

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Palmenlied.*

## The Song of the Playful Prince

How can I love you more?

I see the beasts and flowers

Through eyes of love.

Two stars are busy kissing,

Clouds play

Tender war.

And when we lean,

Collision.

The bump is high and sore.

In your chin's shy dimple

My robber's nest will stay

Till you've nibbled me away.

I'll probably be shaking

When I beg on bended knee.

The ring? Two yellow scarabs

Worth a kingdom, and from me.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Das Lied des Spielprinzen.*

## So Long ...

My dreams go as far

As death

Without a body.

Your alabaster gestures

Remind me we were close.

But now I've lost my way.

In the glitter of the galaxies,

This diamond dress ensnares.

I grasp the nothingness that's there!

*By Else Lasker-Schüler,*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: So lange ist es her...*

## **My Blue Piano**

I have a blue piano.

But I can't play a note.

It's cast shadows on my door.

The world's a savage place.

Four star hands played.

The moon lady sang in a boat.

Now the rats are dancing in chains.

The keyboard's broken.

I weep for the blue dead.

Dear Angel, open up.

I ate the bitter bread.

Here at heaven's gate

The Don't Come In sign stays.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: Mein blaues Klavier.*

## Melancholy

I, the burning desert wind  
Cooled down as I took shape.

Where is the sun that can sink me  
Or the lightning that can strike me?

Look now, a stone sphinx head  
Lashing out at heaven

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Original title: Weltschmerz*

## Homesick

I don't know the language

Of this cool land

Or walk its ways.

Nor can I explain

The shifting clouds.

Night is a step-queen.

Somehow I think of Pharaoh's woods

And kiss the image of my star.

My lips are aglow

With distant speech.

I am a colored picture book

In your lap.

But your face

Spins a veil of tears.

The corals of my shimmering birds

Have been knocked out.

Their tender nests are petrified

In the garden hedges.

Who anoints my dead palaces--

They bore my fathers' crowns.

Their prayers sink in the sacred river.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: Heimweh.*

## Prayer

I look everywhere for a city  
With an angel at the gate.  
Its wings are on my back,  
Shorn off at the shoulder blade  
And its star-seal is on my brow.

As I wander through the night,  
I bear love into the world  
So blue can blossom in all hearts.  
And I keep timeless watch  
Shrouded by God's dark breath.

Oh God, enfold me in your cloak.  
I know I'm the shot glass left for last,  
And when the last man sheds the world,  
You won't leave me out,  
But include me in your new globe.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Gebet.*

## That Night

Once I had to sing.

I can't imagine why.

That night, through bitter tears,

Pain leaked out

Of everything, then turned

And sat on me.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by William Myron Davis.*

*Title of original: Abends.*

## Atonement

A big star is falling in my lap.

We want to keep watch tonight.

And pray in the tongues

Harps are carved of.

We want to atone tonight,

For God is running over.

Our hearts are like tired

Children seeking rest.

Our lips would trade kisses.

Why not?

Don't bind my heart by yours.

You always make me blush.

We want to atone tonight.

And hug, and feel alive.

A big star is falling in my lap.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: Versöhnung.*

## **Listen, You make me sad!**

You wear me out.

Every night your night

Rides piggyback on mine,

Fighting back

Your dreams.

You love me?

I kiss the cloud-sweat on your brow.

The kiss is blue.

What will you do

At the hour of my death?

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Adapted by William Myron Davis.*

*Original title: Du machst mich traurig--hör.*

## Secretly at Night

I have chosen you

Among all stars.

And am awake — a listening flower

In the hum of leaves

Our lips are eager to prepare their honey;

Our shimmering nights have blossomed forth.

On the blessed splendor of your body

My heart ignites its heavens.

All of my dreams hang from your gold;

I have chosen you among all stars.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by Robert P. Newton.*

*Title of original: Heimlich zur Nacht.*

## Abraham and Isaac

In the landscape of Eden  
Abraham built a city of earth and leaves  
And practices talking to God.

The angels would pause at his pious hut,  
And Abraham knew them all.  
Their wingprints left heavenly signs.

Then, in fearsome dreams,  
He heard the bleating of rams,  
While Isaac played at sacrifice  
Behind the licorice trees.

And God admonished: Abraham!  
He stopped the cresting shells and swam  
High to trim God's altar

And with his only son strapped on his back,  
He tried to follow God,  
Who loved Abraham, His servant.

*By Else Lasker-Schüler.*

*Translated by: William Myron Davis*

*Original title: Abraham und Isaak.*