

"Madhouse Cells, Part II" ["Porphyria's Lover"]

By Robert Browning

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and
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BELLS AND POMEGRANATES.
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MADHOUSE CELLS. [Porphyria's Lover]

II.

1 The rain set early in to-night,
2 The sullen wind was soon awake,
3 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
4 And did its worst to vex the lake:
5 I listened with heart fit to break.
6 When glided in Porphyria; straight
7 She shut the cold out and the storm,
8 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
9 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
10 Which done, she rose, and from her form
11 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
12 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
13 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
14 And, last, she sat down by my side
15 And called me. When no voice replied,
16 She put my arm about her waist,
17 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
18 And all her yellow hair displaced,
19 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
20 And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
21 Murmuring how she loved me — she
22 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
23 To set its struggling passion free
24 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
25 And give herself to me for ever.
26 But passion sometimes would prevail,
27 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
28 A sudden thought of one so pale
29 For love of her, and all in vain:
30 So, she was come through wind and rain.
31 Be sure I looked up at her eyes
32 Happy and proud; at last I knew
33 Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
34 Made my heart swell, and still it grew
35 While I debated what to do.
36 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
37 Perfectly pure and good: I found

38 A thing to do, and all her hair
39 In one long yellow string I wound
40 Three times her little throat around,
41 And strangled her. No pain felt she;
42 I am quite sure she felt no pain.
43 As a shut bud that holds a bee,
44 I warily oped her lids: again
45 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
46 And I untightened next the tress
47 About her neck; her cheek once more
48 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
49 I propped her head up as before,
50 Only, this time my shoulder bore
51 Her head, which droops upon it still:
52 The smiling rosy little head,
53 So glad it has its utmost will,
54 That all it scorned at once is fled,
55 And I, its love, am gained instead!
56 Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
57 Her darling one wish would be heard.
58 And thus we sit together now,
59 And all night long we have not stirred,
60 And yet God has not said a word!

