

The Sphinx at Gizeh

by Lord Dunsany

I saw the other day the Sphinx's painted face.

She had painted her face in order to ogle Time.

And he has spared no other painted face in all the world
but hers.

Delilah was younger than she, and Delilah is dust.

Time hath loved nothing but this worthless painted face.

I do not care that she is ugly, nor that she has painted
her face, so that she only lure his secret from Time.

Time dallies like a fool at her feet when he should be
smiting cities.

Time never wearies of her silly smile.

There are temples all about her that he has forgotten to
spoil.

I saw an old man go by, and Time never touched him.

Time that has carried away the seven gates of Thebes!

She has tried to bind him with eternal ropes of sand, she
had hoped to oppress him with the Pyramids.

He lies there in the sand with his foolish hair all
spread about her paws.

If she ever finds his secret we will put out his eyes, so
that she shall find no more our beautiful things -- there are
lovely gates in Florence that I fear he will carry away.

We have tried to bind him with song and with old customs,
but they only held him for a little while, and he has always
smitten us and mocked us.

When he is blind he shall dance to us and make sport.

Great clumsy time shall stumble and dance, who liked to
kill little children, and can hurt even the daisies no
longer.

Then shall our children laugh at him who slew Babylon's
winged bulls, and smote great numbers of the gods and
fairies -- when he is shorn of his hours and his years.

We will shut him up in the Pyramid of Cheops, in the
great chamber where the sarcophagus is. Thence we will lead
him out when we give our feasts. He shall ripen our corn
for us and do menial work.

We will kiss thy painted face, O Sphinx, if thou wilt
betray to us Time.

And yet I fear that in his ultimate anguish he may take
hold blindly of the world and the moon, and slowly pull down

uponhim the House of Man.