

1831

ISRAFEL

Edgar Allan Poe

Poe, Edgar Allan (1809-49) - American poet, short-story writer, and critic who is best known for his tales of ratiocination, his fantastical horror stories, and his genre-founding detective stories. Poe, whose cloudy personal life is a virtual legend, considered himself primarily a poet. Israfel (1831) - One of Poe's poems.

***It deals with Mohammedan legend, heaven, and its lyrical angel. Opening lines:
In Heaven a spirit doth dwell / "whose heart strings are a lute;" ...***

ISRAFEL

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell "Whose heart-strings are a lute"; None sing so wildly well As the angel Israfel, And the giddy stars (so legends tell), Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above In her highest noon, The enamored moon Blushes with love, While, to listen, the red levin (With the rapid Pleiads, even, Which were seven,) Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir And the other listening things) That Israfeli's fire Is owing to that lyre By which he sits and sings The trembling living wire Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod, Where deep thoughts are a duty Where Love's a grown-up God Where the Houri glances are Imbued with all the beauty Which we worship in a star.

Therefore thou art not wrong, Israfeli, who despisest An unimpassioned song; To thee the laurels belong, Best bard, because the wisest!

Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above With thy burning measures suit Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love, With the fervor of thy lute Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this Is a world of sweets and sour; Our flowers are merely- flowers, And the shadow of thy perfect bliss Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell Where Israfel Hath dwelt, and he where I, He might not sing so wildly well A mortal melody, While a bolder note than this might swell From my lyre within the sky.

THE END