

1990

# Why All Good Music Is Sad

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## Recommended Citation

Twichell, Chase. "Why All Good Music Is Sad." *The Iowa Review* 20.2 (1990): 16-17. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3871>

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It's the words to the long slow sad  
familiar hymn about the hourglass.

I lie beside my love  
in the silence between two waves,

the grains of my body pouring.  
I know that the second wave will ripen

and fall. It will fall in a world  
that is emerald and sapphire,

lit by the sparks of the sea. A world  
that will darken and abandon me.

### WHY ALL GOOD MUSIC IS SAD

Before I knew that I would die,  
I lolled in the cool green twilight  
over the reef, the hot sun on my back,  
watching the iridescent schools  
flick and glide among stone flowers,  
and the lacy fans blow back and forth  
in the watery winds of the underworld.  
I saw the long, bright muscle of a fish  
writhing on a spear, spasm and flash,  
a music violent and gleaming,  
abandoned to its one desire.  
The white radiance of Perdido  
filtered down through the rocking gloom  
so that it was Perdido there too,  
in that strange, stroking, half-lit world.  
Before I knew that love  
would end my willful ignorance of death,  
I didn't think there was much  
left in me that was virgin, but there was.

That's why all good music is sad.  
It makes the sound of the end before the end,  
and leaves behind it  
the ghost of the part that was sacrificed,  
a chord to represent the membrane,  
broken only once, that keeps the world away.  
That's how the fish became the metaphor:  
one lithe and silvery life impaled,  
fighting death with its own failing beauty,  
thrashing on the apex of its fear.  
Art was once my cold solace,  
the ice-pack I held to love's torn body,  
but that was before I lay  
as if asleep above the wavering reef,  
or saw the barbed spear strike the fish  
that seemed for an instant to be  
something outside myself, before I knew  
that the sea was my bed and the fish was me.

## REMEMBER DEATH

Nothing in the red leaves  
distinguishes this year from any other.  
The haunted planet could be sloughing off  
its worn-out parts in any age,  
spreading its musky bedding  
under the trees for us to lie on.  
I look up over his shoulder as he enters me,  
up into the high vaults  
of the Church of the Falling Leaf,  
and hear the swollen hum, and see  
not ten feet above us  
the pale gray paper of the nest,  
the branch bent down,  
wasps dropping from the hole  
like little paratroopers