

The Collar Summary

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Anger and Frustration/Religious Restrictions

The speaker (a priest) hits the table angrily and shouts. He is very frustrated. He wants to leave his religious duties and live freely. He asks why he should always live sadly and hopelessly. He feels his life is free, like an open road and the blowing wind.

No Rewards, Only Pain

The speaker complains that his hard work as a priest brings him only pain (like thorns). He has no real rewards (good fruits). He feels life has taken away more from him than it has given back. He remembers better times in the past. There was joy (symbolized by wine) before sadness dried it up, and there was plenty of food/God's blessings (corn) before his tears destroyed it. He wonders if the whole year of life is wasted. There is no victory, no honor, no success—only failure and destruction.

Religious Doubt

He tells his heart there is still hope. He has strength in his hands. He tells himself that he can recover lost time by enjoying double pleasures instead of wasting life in sadness. He decides to stop worrying about what is right or wrong. He wants to break free from his mental prison (a cage) and false restrictions (like ropes made of sand). He thinks only his false thoughts have made these religious restrictions for him. He shouts with new energy and says he will leave his religious duties now. He says he will not fear death (Death's head) anymore. He believes anyone who avoids living freely deserves to carry his own heavy burden.

Child, My Lord

Then the speaker admits he became wild. He became angrier with every word. His emotions were out of control, and he felt rebellious. Suddenly, he hears a calm, gentle voice calling him "Child!" He instantly recognizes it as God's voice and replies, "My Lord." He becomes peaceful and humble. This ends his anger. He submits to God's will.