Conrad Aiken (1889-1973)

Dead Cleopatra

for Julianza Shavin

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once reverenced reverently in Egypt—warm eyed she was, this princess of the south. Now she is very old and dry and faded.

With black bitumen they have sealed up her mouth. Grave robbers pulled the gold rings from her
fingers, despite the holy symbols almost

cross her breast;

They scared the bats that quietly whirled above her.

Poor lady!
What would her lover have said, had he foreseen it?

Dead Cleopatra

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Prevented, obscene, to mock black flight of years.
Had he been moved to ecstasy, or to tears?

sweet, clean earth from whom the green blade cometh, when we are dead, my best beloved and I, close well above us that we may rest forever.