

DIRGE FOR IGNACIO SANCHEZ MEJIAS
by Federico García Lorca

Translated by Justin Vitiello
Temple University Philadelphia

1. THE CATCH AND DEATH

At 5 in the afternoon—
it was 5 p.m. —exactly—
a child fetched the white sheet
at 5 o'clock
a basket of lime made up in case
in the afternoon
the rest-death death death
at 5 in the afternoon.

The wind bore off the cotton balls
at 5 o'clock
oxide sowed crystal and nickel
in the afternoon
dove and leopard wrestle
at 5 o'clock
thigh and desolate shank
in the afternoon
dances of bass-strings began
at 5 o'clock
bells of arsenic and fume
in the afternoon
corners of multitudes of silence
at 5 o'clock

only the bull with heart on high
in the afternoon
when sweat of snow kept on coming
at 5 o'clock
when the plaza spread with iodine
in the afternoon
death laid eggs in the wound
at 5—
at 5 in the afternoon—
at 5 p.m. —exactly—.

A casket with casters is the bed
at 5 o'clock
bones and flutes play at his eardrums
in the afternoon
the bull was lowing across his face
at 5 o'clock
the room rainbowing in agony
in the afternoon
from afar gangrene approaches
at 5 o'clock
horn of lily through green groins
in the afternoon
wounds firing like suns
at 5 o'clock
the mob breaking windows
in the afternoon—
5—
in the afternoon—
oh
that monstrous 5 o'clock—
it was 5 by all the clocks—
the shadows said 5
in the afternoon.

2. THE BLOOD Poured FORTH

I don't want to see it

Tell the moon to come
I don't want to see the blood
of Ignacio upon the sands

I don't want to see it

Moon wide open
Horse of peaceful clouds
and the grey plaza of dream
with willows at the barricades

I don't want to see it
My memory is fire
Inform the jasmine and its
minute white

I don't want to see it

The cow of the old world
(passing her sad tongue
over a snout of gore
poured forth on the sands)
and the bulls of Guisando
(almost death and almost stone)
lowed like two centuries
fed up with treading grass
No

I don't want to see it

Ignacio scales the grandstands
toting all his death—

once looking for the dawning
and it was no more—
he looks for his confident form
and the dream drives him west to east—
once looking for his beautiful body
he found his full-blown blood
Don't say I should see it
I don't want to feel the jet
ebbing with each throb—
that jet that illumines tiers
and spills over
the velveteen and pelt
of the thirsty rabble—
who shouts for me to appear?
Don't say I should see it

His eyes did not blink
fixed on the horn
but the monstrous mothers
raised their heads
and all through the pastures
there hovered
a redolence
of secret voices
shouting to bulls in the sky:
herders of pale murk

There was no prince in Seville
who could be called his equal
no sword like his sword
no heart as open
Like a river of lions
his amazing fortitude
and like a torso of marble
his striking precision of judgment

Redolence of Andalusian Rome
crowning his head with light
where his laugh was a spikenard
an old salt's wit and wisdom
Imposing torero in the plaza
Imposing mountaineer in the range
So gentle with the tassels
So rigorous with the spurs
So tender with the dew
So dazzling at the festival
So awesome with the last
banderillas of gloom

But now he sleeps without end—
now the mosses and grass
open with confident fingers
the blossom of his skull—
and his blood now comes singing
singing through swamps and meadows
gliding along horns stiff with cold
reeling soulless through the murk
colliding with myriad cloven hoofs
like a long dark sad tongue
to form a puddle of agony
along the Guadalquivir of the stars

White wall of Spain
Black bull of suffering
Steel blood of Ignacio
Nightingale of his veins

No

I don't want to see it
No chalice to hold it
no swallows to gorge it
no glowing rime to chill it
no chant no flood of white lilies

no crystal to cover it like silver

No— I

don't want to see it

3. THE BODY PRESENTED

The rock is a face where dreams moan
without twisting streams or frozen cypress
The rock is a shoulder to bear time along
with trees of tears and sashes and planets

I have seen grey rains run toward the waves
raising tender perforated arms
not to be hunted down by distended rock
that cuts loose its members without sucking un the blood

For the rock snatches seeds and clouded skies
skeleons of larks and wolves of penumbra
yet it does not yield sounds or crystal or fire
but plazas plazas more plazas without walls

Ignacio— born
in a good hour—
now is upon the rock
Now all is done
What's happening?
Behold him in relief:
death has covered him with pale brimstones
decking him with the head of a dark minotaur

Now all is done
Rain fathoms his mouth
The air, as if mad, leaves him a sunken breast
and Love, sucked full of tears of snow,
heats up at the crest of the pastures

What are they saying?
A silence with stenches abides
We are with a body presented
and it cremates piece by piece
with a glorious corpus that embraced nightingales
and we see it fill up with bottomless holes

Who creases the shroud?
What he says is not true!
Here no one sings or weeps in the corner
or digs in the spurs or frightens off the serpent
Here I want nothing but great round eyes
to see this body with no conceivable rest

I want to see here
men of steel voice
those who break horses and battle rivers
men who hear skeletons resounding and sing
with mouth full of sun and flint stones

Here I want to see them
Before the rock
Before this body with broken reins
I want them to show me the simple way out
for this captain bound by death

I want them to show me
a wailing like a river
that might embrace sweet murks and deep shores
to bear the body of Ignacio—
the body wandering off
out of hearing
of the bull's double-barrelled breath

Wandering through the great round plaza of the moon
that as a child plays the dying swan
Wandering through the night with the chant of fish
and through the white thicket of congealed fume

I don't want them to spread handkerchiefs
across his face
so he gets used to the death he bears
Go, Ignacio: don't sense the hot bellow
Sleep, fly, rest: yes,
the sea dies as well

4. ABSENT SOUL

Strange to you: bull and fig tree
horses and ants where you abide
Strange to you: child and afternoon
for you have died an endless death

Strange to you: chine of rock
and the velvet black where you shatter
Strange to you: your mute memory
for you have died an endless death

Autumn will come: horns of white snail
grape of murk, clustered mountains
but no one will want to look upon your eyes
for you have died an endless death

For you have died an endless death
like all the dead of the Earth
like all the dead who meet oblivion
in a steaming pile of choked out dogs

Stranger to all. And yet— I sing of you
For here and after I sing your form and grace
The conspicuous fruits of your understanding
Your lust for death and the savor of its mouth
The sadness contained in your brave gaiety

Long in coming— if ever— will be the birth
of an Andalusian so glorious in games of chance
I sing his elegance with words that moan
and recall a sad breeze through the olive groves.

Abundance ideas sobre la adaptación a
la pequeña pantalla de PERSUASION
de José María