

Chapter 14

In which are found the desperate verses of the deceased shepherd, along with other unexpected occurrences

GRISÓSTOMO'S SONG

Since you, most cruel, wish all tongues to proclaim,
all men to know the harsh power of your will,
I will have hell itself teach a mournful song
to my grieving breast; then add to that discord
with the stridency of this my tuneless voice.
And, companion to my desire as it strives
to tell of my sorrow and your heartless deeds,
that fearful voice will resound; worse torment,
it will carry pieces of my wretched heart.
Listen, then, to no harmonious song
but to the clangor rising from the depths
of my embittered breast, and borne by frenzy,
sounding to my delight and your displeasure.

The roar of the lion, the fearful howling
of the savage wolf, the terrible hisses
of the scaly serpent, the ghastly shrieks of
monsters, the portents of the raven's croak,
the din of winds battling unsettled seas,
the great bull's vengeful bellow in defeat,
the widowed turtledove's heartbroken call,
the grief-stricken hooting of the envied owl, and
the cries of all the souls in darkest hell,
let these join with my spirit in its grief,
blending in song, confounding all the senses,
for the merciless anguish I endure
demands new modes, new styles, for its recounting.

The wailing echoes of this dissonance
will not be heard on sands of Father Tajo,
or in the Andalusian olive groves:
my heartless agony will be carried by
a dead man's tongue, in words that will survive him,

to craggy heights, or bottomless ravines,
to darkened valleys, to some hostile shore
bare of human commerce, or to places where
the sunlight ne'er was seen, or to the hordes of
ravening toxic beasts that live and thrive
on the Libyan plain; for though in desert wastes
the hoarse, uncertain echoes of my ills
may sound with unmatched harshness, like your own,
as a privilege of my destiny cut short,
they will be carried all around the world.

Disdain can kill, suspicions true or false
can bring down patience; and jealousy slays
with grim ferocity; long absence can
confound a life; feared oblivion defeats
the surest hope for a life of happiness.
In all this, certain death cannot be fled;
but I – O wondrous miracle! – I live on
jealous, absent, disdained, and certain
of suspicions that fell me, forgotten by one
for whom I bum with ever hotter flame,
and in so much torment I can never see
even the shadow of hope that, in despair,
I do not attempt to find; rather, to carry
my woe to the furthest extreme, I vow
eternally to live bereft of hope.

Can one feel hope and at the same time fear,
or is it wise to do so when the reasons
for fear are so much stronger? Must I then
close these eyes when flint-hard jealousy
appears before them, only to watch it tear
a thousand open wounds deep in my soul?
Who would not open wide the door to despair
when he sees disdain undisguised, laid bare,
when he sees all his suspicions, oh bitter

transformation, converted into truths,
and honest truth transmuted into lies?
O jealousy, in the kingdom of love
a pitiless tyrant, place these my hands
in chains. And condemn me, disdain,
to be bound in twisted rope. But woe is me
when in your memory, o cruelest triumph,
my suffering is smothered and erased.

I die, I die; and so that I may never
hope for a good end in my death or life
I will be steadfast in my vagaries,
say that true love is bound to succeed, say
the soul most enslaved to the ancient tyranny
of love, lives most free. Say that my enemy
is beautiful in body and in soul, that
I bear the blame for her forgetting me,
that love inflicts these sorrows and these ills
to keep his realm in order and at peace.
With this thought and a merciless cruel scourge
I will slash and cut the brief time left to me
by your disdain, and offer to the winds
this soul and body, uncrowned by the palm
or laurel of future bliss and joy to come.

You, whose unreason shows the reason clear
that forces me to end this weary life
grown hateful to me, can see the patent signs
of the fatal wound that cuts this heart in two,
and how I bend, submissive, to your will,
and if, by chance, you learn that I deserve
to have clouds fill the fair sky of your eyes
when you hear of my death, forbid it, for I
want you unrepentant, without remorse, when
I hand to you the ruins of my soul.
And then your laughter at that grievous time
will show my end was cause for your rejoicing;
what lack of wit to caution you in this,
when I know your brightest glory lies in seeing
that my life draws so quickly to its close.

Come, it is time for Tantalus to rise
with all his thirst from the abysmal deeps;
let Sisyphus come, bearing the awful weight
of that dread stone; let Tityus bring the vultures,
let Ixion hasten on the remorseless wheel,
and the grim sisters ceaseless at their toil;
may they pass their mortal torments to my breast,
and in hushed voices let them sadly chant
– if one in despair deserves such obsequies –
songs to a body not yet in its shroud.
And the three-faced guardian of the gates
of hell, chimeras, monsters by the thousands,
let them intone the dolorous counterpoint;
for there can be no better funeral rite
than this, I think, for one who dies of love.
Song of despair, do not weep at leaving me;
since that will swell the joy of one who is
the reason for your birth and my misfortune,
do not grieve for me even in the grave.

Those who had listened to Orisóstomo's song thought it was very good, though the one who read it said he did not think it conformed to the accounts he had heard of Marcela's virtue and modesty, because in it Grisóstomo complained of jealousy, suspicions, and absence, all to the detriment of Marcela's good name and reputation. To which Ambrosio, as the one who knew best the most hidden thoughts of his friend, replied:

“Señor, so that you may free yourself of this doubt, you ought to know that when the unfortunate man wrote this song he was absent from Marcela; he had absented himself from her voluntarily, to see if absence would have its customary effects on him, and since there is nothing that does not vex the absent lover, and no fear that does not overwhelm him, Orisóstomo was as vexed by the jealousy he imagined and the suspicions he feared as if they had been real. And with this the truth of Marcela's reputation for virtue remains unshaken; for aside from her being cruel, and somewhat arrogant, and very disdainful, envy itself cannot or should not find any fault in her.”

“That is true,” responded Vivaldo.

He wanted to read another of the papers he had rescued from the fire but was stopped by a marvelous vision—this is what it seemed to him that suddenly appeared before his eyes; at the top of the crag where the grave was being dug, there came into view the shepherdess Marcela, whose beauty far surpassed her fame for beauty. Those who had not seen her before looked at her in amazement and silence, and those who were already accustomed to seeing her were no less thunderstruck than those who had not seen her until then. But no sooner had he seen her than Ambrosio, showing signs of outrage, said to her:

“Do you come, O savage basilisk of these mountains, to see if with your presence blood spurts from the wounds of this wretched man whose life was taken by your cruelty?¹ Or do you come to gloat over the cruelties of your nature, or to watch from that height, like another heartless Nero, the flames of burning Rome, or, in your arrogance, to tread on this unfortunate corpse, as the ungrateful daughter of Tarquinus² did to the body of her father? Tell us quickly why you have come, or what it is you want most, for since I know that Grisóstomo’s thoughts never failed to obey you in life, I shall see to it that even though he is dead, those who called themselves his friends will obey you as well.”

“I do not come, O Ambrosio, for any of the causes you have mentioned,” Marcela responded, “but I return here on my own behalf to explain how unreasonable are those who in their grief blame me for the death of Grisóstomo, and so I beg all those present to hear me, for there will be no need to spend much time or waste many words to persuade discerning men of the truth. Heaven made me, as all of you say, so beautiful that you cannot resist my beauty and are compelled to love me, and because of the love you show me, you claim that I am obliged to love you in return. I know, with the natural understanding that God has given me, that everything beautiful is lovable, but I cannot grasp why, simply because it is loved, the thing loved for its beauty is obliged to love the one who loves it. Further, the lover of the beautiful thing might be ugly, and since ugliness is worthy of being avoided, it is absurd for anyone to say: ‘I love you because you are beautiful; you must love me even though I am ugly.’ But in the event the two are equally beautiful, it does not mean that their desires are necessarily equal, for not all beauties fall in love; some are

1. According to a medieval legend, the wounds of a murder victim would bleed in the presence of the killer.

2. The reference is to Tulia, the wife, not the daughter, of the Roman king Tarquinus the Proud.

a pleasure to the eye but do not surrender their will, because if all beauties loved and surrendered, there would be a whirl of confused and misled wills not knowing where they should stop, for since beautiful subjects are infinite, desires would have to be infinite, too.

According to what I have heard, true love is not divided and must be voluntary, not forced. If this is true, as I believe it is, why do you want to force me to surrender my will, obliged to do so simply because you say you love me? But if this is not true, then tell me: if the heaven that made me beautiful had made me ugly instead, would it be fair for me to complain that none of you loved me? Moreover, you must consider that I did not choose the beauty I have, and, such as it is, heaven gave it to me freely, without my requesting or choosing it. And just as the viper does not deserve to be blamed for its venom, although it kills, since it was given the venom by nature, I do not deserve to be reproved for being beautiful, for beauty in the chaste woman is like a distant fire or sharp-edged sword: they do not burn or cut the person who does not approach them. Honor and virtue are adornments of the soul, without which the body is not truly beautiful, even if it seems to be so. And if chastity is one of the virtues that most adorn and beautify both body and soul, why should a woman, loved for being beautiful, lose that virtue in order to satisfy the desire of a man who, for the sake of his pleasure, attempts with all his might and main to have her lose it?

I was born free, and in order to live free I chose the solitude of the countryside. The trees of these mountains are my companions, the clear waters of these streams my mirrors; I communicate my thoughts and my beauty to the trees and to the waters. I am a distant fire and a far-off sword. Those whose eyes forced them to fall in love with me, I have discouraged with my words. If desires feed on hopes, and since I have given no hope to Grisóstomo or to any other man regarding those desires, it is correct to say that his obstinacy, not my cruelty, is what killed him. And if you claim that his thoughts were virtuous, and for this reason I was obliged to respond to them, I say that when he revealed to me the virtue of his desire, on the very spot where his grave is now being dug, I told him that mine was to live perpetually alone and have only the earth enjoy the fruit of my seclusion and the spoils of my beauty; and if he, despite that discouragement, wished to persist against all hope and sail into the wind, why be surprised if he drowned in the middle of the gulf of his folly? If I had kept him by me, I would have been false; if I had gratified him, I

would have gone against my own best intentions and purposes. He persisted though I discouraged him, he despaired though I did not despise him: tell me now if it is reasonable to blame me for his grief! Let the one I deceived complain, let the man despair to whom I did not grant a hope I had promised, or speak if I called to him, or boast if I accepted him; but no man can call me cruel or a murderer if I do not promise, deceive, call to, or accept him. Until now heaven has not ordained that I love, and to think that I shall love of my own accord is to think the impossible.

Let this general discouragement serve for each of those who solicit me for his own advantage; let it be understood from this day forth that if anyone dies because of me, he does not die of jealousy or misfortune, because she who loves no one cannot make anyone jealous, and discouragement should not be taken for disdain. Let him who calls me savage basilisk avoid me as he would something harmful and evil; let him who calls me ungrateful, not serve me, unapproachable, not approach me, cruel, not follow me; let him not seek out, serve, approach, or follow in any way this savage, ungrateful, cruel, unapproachable basilisk. For if his impatience and rash desire killed Grisóstomo, why should my virtuous behavior and reserve be blamed? If I preserve my purity in the company of trees, why should a man want me to lose it if he wants me to keep it in the company of men? As you know, I have wealth of my own and do not desire anyone else's; I am free and do not care to submit to another; I do not love or despise anyone. I do not deceive this one or solicit that one; I do not mock one or amuse myself with another. The honest conversation of the shepherdesses from these hamlets, and tending to my goats, are my entertainment. The limits of my desires are these mountains, and if they go beyond here, it is to contemplate the beauty of heaven and the steps whereby the soul travels to its first home."

And having said this, and not waiting to hear any response, she turned her back and entered the densest part of a nearby forest, leaving all those present filled with admiration as much for her intelligence as for her beauty. And some-those who were pierced by the powerful arrow of the light in her beautiful eyes-gave indications of wishing to follow her, disregarding the patent discouragement they had heard. Seeing this, Don Quixote thought it an appropriate time to put his chivalry into practice by coming to the aid of a maiden in distress, and he placed his hand on the hilt of his sword, and in a loud, clear voice he said:

"Let no person, whatever his circumstance or condition, dare to follow the beautiful Marcela lest he fall victim to my fury and outrage. She has shown with clear and sufficient reasons that she bears little or no blame in the death of Grisóstomo, and she has also shown how far she is from acquiescing to the desires of any who love her, and therefore it is just that rather than being followed and persecuted, she should be honored and esteemed by all good people in the world, for she has shown herself to be the only woman in it who lives with so virtuous a desire."

Whether it was because of Don Quixote's warnings, or because Ambrosio said they should conclude what they owed to their good friend, none of the shepherds left or moved away from the place until, when the grave was dug and Grisóstomo's papers had been burned, they placed his body in the ground, not without those present shedding many tears. They closed the grave with a heavy boulder until such time as the stone was finished that, Ambrosio said, he planned to have made, with an epitaph that would read:

Here lies the sad cold
body of a lover,
a shepherd destroyed
by an icy heart.
The pitiless hand
of cruel beauty killed him,
extending the power
of love's tyranny.

Then they scattered many flowers and branches over the grave, offered their condolences to his friend Ambrosio, and took their leave of him. Vivaldo and his companion said goodbye, and Don Quixote bade farewell to his hosts and to the two travelers, who asked him to accompany them to Sevilla because it was a place so well-suited to finding adventures, since more were to be found there on every street and around every corner than in any other city. Don Quixote thanked them for the information and their clear desire to favor him, but he said that for the moment he should not nor did he wish to go to Sevilla, until he had emptied those mountains that were full, it was said, of villainous thieves. Seeing his firm determination, the travelers did not wish to importune him, and saying goodbye again, they left him and continued their journey,

during which they had much to talk about, from the history of Marcela and Grióstomo to the madness of Don Quixote. Our knight resolved to seek out the shepherdess Marcela and offer to serve her in any way he could. But matters did not turn out as he expected, as is recounted in the course of this true history, the second part of which concludes here.