

THE ERMINIA (*from Canto Nineteen*)

Text by TORQUATO TASSO from *Gerusalemme Liberata*

Translation by Ralph Nash (request permission for performances or recordings from publisher)

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e in lui verso d'inessicabil vena
lacrime e voce di sospiri mista:
"In che misero punto or qui mi mena
fortuna? a che veduta amara e trista?
Dopo gran tempo i' ti ritrovo a pena,
Tancredi, e ti riveggio e non son vista:
vista non son da te benche presente,
e trovando ti perdo eternamente.

And poured out over him tears from an inexhaustible
spring, and speech mingled with sobbing:

"Now in what wretched hour does Fortune bring me
here? to what sad and bitter spectacle? After so
long a time, with much ado, I find you,
Tandred, and I see you again, and am not seen. I am
not seen by you though I am with you; and finding
you I am losing you forever.

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"Misera! non credea ch'a gli occhi miei
potessi in alcun tempo esser noioso.
Or cieca farmi volentier torrei
per non vederti, e riguardar non oso.
Oime, de' lumi gia si dolci e rei
Ov'e la fiamma? ov'e il bel raggio ascoso?
de le fiorite guancie' il bel vermiglio
ov'e fuggito? ov'e il seren del ciglio?"

"Wretched me! I had not thought that you could
ever be troublesome to my eyes.

Now would I readily choose to blind myself to
keep from seeing you, and dare not look.

Ay me, where now is the brilliance of those eyes so
lovely once, so cruel? where is the proud gleam hidden?
the beautiful crimson of your blooming cheeks,
where is it fled? where is the serenity of your brow?

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"Ma che?
squallido e scuro anco mi piaci.
Anima bella, se quinci entro gire,
s'odi il mio pianto, a le mie voglie audaci
perdona il furto e 'l temerario ardire:
da le pallide labra i freddi baci,
che piu caldi sperai, vuo' pur rapire;
parte torro di sue ragioni a morte,
baciando queste labra essanguì e smorte.

"But to what purpose?

Though pale and overcast, yet would you satisfy me.
Lovely soul, if you be there within,
if you hear my plaint, pardon my bold desires
their theft and audacious daring.

From the pale lips I mean to pluck even yet
the cold kisses that I hoped to have with more heat.
I shall take from death a part of his rights in you,
kissing these bloodless lips and pale.

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"Raccogli tu l'anima mia segauce,
drizzala tu dove la tua se 'n gio."
Cosi parla gemendo, e si disface
quasi per gli occhi, e par conversa in rio.
Rivenne quegli a quell'umor vivace
e le languide labra alquanto aprio:
apri le labra e con le luci chiuse
un suo sospir con que' di lei confuse.

"Receive my soul that follows,
give it direction wherever yours has gone."

Thus she speaks, sobbing, and is as it were
dissolved through her eyes and seems turned into a river.
With that refreshing dew he came to himself
and somewhat parted his languid lips:
he parted his lips and with eyes still closed
he mingled one of his signs with those of hers.

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Sente la donna il cavalier che geme,
e forza e pur che si conforti alquanto:
"Apri gli occhi, Tancredi, a queste estreme
essequie," grida, "ch'io ti fo co 'l pianto;
riguarda me che vuo' venirme insieme
la lunga strada e vuo' morirti a canto.
Riguarda me, non te 'n fuggir si presto:
l'ultimo don ch'io ti dimando e questo."

The lady hears how the knight groans,
and must perforce be somewhat heartened by it.

"Open your eyes, Tandred (she cries) for these last
obsequies that I make you with my grieving.
Look upon me, how I wish to travel the long road
with you and to die at your side.
Look upon me; be not so quick to flee.
This is the last gift that I ask of you."