

Classic Poetry Series

Alfonsina Storni
- poems -

Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Alfonsina Storni(29 May 1892 – 25 October 1938)

Storni was born in Sala Capriasca, Switzerland to an Argentine beer industrialist living in Switzerland for a few years. There, Storni learned to speak Italian. Following the failure of the family business, they opened a tavern in the city of Rosario, Argentina, where Storni worked at a variety of chores.

In 1907, she joined a traveling theatre company which took her around the country. With them she performed in Henrik Ibsen's *Spectres*, Benito Pérez Galdós's *La loca de la casa*, and Florencio Sánchez's *Los muertos*.

Back in Rosario she finished her studies as a rural primary teacher, and also started working for *Mundo Rosarino* and *Monos y Monadas* local magazines, as well as *Mundo Argentino*.

In 1911 she moved to Buenos Aires, seeking the anonymity of a big city. The following year her son Alejandro was born, the illegitimate child of a journalist in Coronda.

In spite of her economic difficulties, she published *La inquietud del rosal* in 1916, and later started writing for *Caras y Caretas* magazine while working as a cashier in a shop.

Storni soon became acquainted with other writers such as José Enrique Rodó and [" <a href="](#)

Her economic situation improved, which allowed her to travel to Montevideo, Uruguay. There she met the poet Juana de Ibarbourou, as well as Horacio Quiroga, with whom she would become great friends. Her 1920 book *Languidez* received the first Municipal Poetry Prize and the second National Literature Prize.

She taught literature at the *Escuela Normal de Lenguas Vivas*, and she published *Ocre*. Her style now showed more realism than before, and a strongly feminist theme. Solitude and marginality began to affect her health, and worsening emotional problems forced her to leave her job as teacher.

Trips to Europe changed her writing by helping her to lose her former models, and reach a more dramatic lyricism, loaded with an erotic vehemence unknown in those days, and new feminist thoughts in *Mundo de siete pozos* (1934) and *Mascarilla y trébol* (1938).

A year and a half after her friend Quiroga committed suicide in 1937, and haunted by solitude and breast cancer, Storni sent her last poem, *Voy a dormir* ("I'm going to sleep") to *La Nación* newspaper in October 1938. Around 1:00 AM on Tuesday the 25th, Alfonsina left her room and headed towards the sea at La Perla beach in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Later that morning two workers found her body washed up on the beach. Although her biographers hold that she jumped into the water from a breakwater, popular legend is that she slowly walked out to sea until she drowned.

Her death inspired Ariel Ramírez and Félix Luna to compose the song *Alfonsina y el Mar* ("Alfonsina and the sea"), which has been performed by Mercedes Sosa, Tania Libertad, Nana Mouskouri, Mocedades, Andrés Calamaro, Katia Cardenal and many others.

Also, fifty years after her death, she inspired the Latin American artist Aquino to incorporate her image into many of his paintings.

Storni once referred to men as *el enemigo*, "the enemy." Much of Storni's work focuses on what she sees as the repression of women by men. This often takes the form of personal insults directed at men in general.

A Eros (To Eros)

HE AQUÍ que te cacé por el pescuezo
a la orilla del mar, mientras movías
las flechas de tu aljaba para herirme
y vi en el suelo tu floreal corona.

Como a un muñeco destripé tu vientre
y examiné sus ruedas engañosas
y muy envuelta en sus poleas de oro
hallé una trampa que decía: sexo.

Sobre la playa, ya un guiñapo triste,
te mostré al sol, buscón de tus hazañas,
ante un corro asustado de sirenas.

Iba subiendo por la cuesta albina
tu madrina de engaños, Doña Luna,
y te arrojé a la boca de las olas.

Translation

I caught you by the neck
on the shore of the sea, while you shot
arrows from your quiver to wound me
and on the ground I saw your flowered crown.

I disemboweled your stomach like a doll's
and examined your deceitful wheels,
and deeply hidden in your golden pulleys
I found a trapdoor that said: sex.

On the beach I held you, now a sad heap,
up to the sun, accomplice of your deeds,
before a chorus of frightened sirens.
Your deceitful godmother, the moon
was climbing through the crest of the dawn,
and I threw you into the mouth of the waves.

A Madona Poesia (To My Lady Of Poetry)

AQUI a tus pies lanzada, pecadora,
contra tu tierra azul, mi cara oscura,
tú, virgen entre ejércitos de palmas
que no encanecen como los humanos.

No me atrevo a mirar tus ojos puros
ni a tocarte la mano milagrosa;
miro hacia atrás y un río de lujurias
me ladra contra tí, sin Culpa Alzada.

Una pequeña rama verdecida
en tu orla pongo con humilde intento
de pecar menos, por tu fina gracia,

ya que vivir cortada de tu sombra
posible no me fue, que me cegaste
cuando nacida con tus hierros bravos.

Translation:

I throw myself here at your feet, sinful,
my dark face against your blue earth,
you the virgin among armies of palm trees
that never grow old as humans do.

I don't dare look at your pure eyes
or dare touch your miraculous hand:
I look behind me and a river of rashness
urges me guiltlessly on against you.

With a promise to mend my ways through your
divine grace, I humbly place on your
hem a little green branch,
for I couldn't have possibly lived
cut off from your shadow, since you blinded me
at birth with your fierce branding iron.

Alma Desnuda

SOY un alma desnuda en estos versos,
Alma desnuda que angustiada y sola
Va dejando sus pétalos dispersos.

Alma que puede ser una amapola,
Que puede ser un lirio, una violeta,
Un peñasco, una selva y una ola.

Alma que como el viento vaga inquieta
Y ruge cuando está sobre los mares,
Y duerme dulcemente en una grieta.

Alma que adora sobre sus altares,
Dioses que no se bajan a cegarla;
Alma que no conoce valladares.

Alma que fuera fácil dominarla
Con sólo un corazón que se partiera
Para en su sangre cálida regarla.

Alma que cuando está en la primavera
Dice al invierno que demora: vuelve,
Caiga tu nieve sobre la pradera.

Alma que cuando nieva se disuelve
En tristezas, clamando por las rosas
Con que la primavera nos envuelve.

Alma que a ratos suelta mariposas
A campo abierto, sin fijar distancia,
Y les dice libad sobre las cosas.

Alma que ha de morir de una fragancia,
De un suspiro, de un verso en que se ruega,
Sin perder, a poderlo, su elegancia.

Alma que nada sabe y todo niega
Y negando lo bueno el bien propicia
Porque es negando como más se entrega,

Alma que suele haber como delicia
Palpar las almas, despreciar la huella,
Y sentir en la mano una caricia.

Alma que siempre disconforme de ella,
Como los vientos vaga, corre y gira;
Alma que sangra y sin cesar delira
Por ser el buque en marcha de la estrella.

Alfonsina Storni

Animal Cansado

Quiero un amor feroz de garra y diente
Que me asalte a traición a pleno día
Y que sofoque esta soberbia mía
este orgullo de ser todo pudiente.

Quiero un amor feroz de garra y diente
Que en carne viva inicie mi sangría
A ver si acaba esta melancolía
Que me corrompe el alma lentamente.

Quiero un amor que sea una tormenta
Que todo rompe y lo renueva todo
Porque vigor profundo lo alimenta.

Que pueda reanimarse allí mi lodo,
Mi pobre lodo de animal cansado
Por viejas sendas de rodar hastiado.

Alfonsina Storni

Hombre Pequeñito

Hombre pequeño, hombre pequeño,
suelta a tu canario que quiere volar
Yo soy el canario, hombre pequeño,
déjame saltar.

Estuve en tu jaula, hombre pequeño,
hombre pequeño que jaula me das.
Digo pequeño porque no me entiendes,
ni me entenderás.

Tampoco te entiendo, pero mientras tanto,
ábreme la jaula que quiero escapar.
Hombre pequeño, te amé media hora,
no me pidas más.

Alfonsina Storni

I Am Going To Sleep

Teeth of flowers, hairnet of dew,
hands of herbs, you, perfect wet nurse,
prepare the earthly sheets for me
and the down quilt of weeded moss.

I am going to sleep, my nurse, put me to bed.
Set a lamp at my headboard;
a constellation; whatever you like;
all are good: lower it a bit.

Leave me alone: you hear the buds breaking through . . .
a celestial foot rocks you from above
and a bird traces a pattern for you

so you'll forget . . . Thank you. Oh, one request:
if he telephones again
tell him not to keep trying for I have left . . .

Alfonsina Storni

Lighthouse In The Night

The sky a black sphere,
the sea a black disk.

The lighthouse opens
its solar fan on the coast.

Spinning endlessly at night,
whom is it searching for

when the mortal heart
looks for me in the chest?

Look at the black rock
where it is nailed down.

A crow digs endlessly
but no longer bleeds.

Alfonsina Storni

Little Little Man

Little little man, little little man,
set free your canary that wants to fly.
I am that canary, little little man,
leave me to fly.

I was in your cage, little little man,
little little man who gave me my cage.
I say "little little" because you don't understand me
Nor will you understand.

Nor do I understand you, but meanwhile,
open for me the cage from which I want to escape.
Little little man, I loved you half an hour,
Don't ask me again.

Alfonsina Storni

My Sister

It's ten o'clock at night; in the room in semidarkness
My sister is asleep, hands on her chest;
Her face is very white and very white her bed,
As if it understood, the light is almost unlit

She sinks into the bed like rosy fruit,
from smooth pastures into the depths of the mattress.
The air enters her chest and raises it chastely
With its rhythm measuring the fleeting minutes.

I tuck her tenderly into the white covers
And protect from the air her two divine hands;
Walking on tiptoe I close all the doors,
leave the shutters half-open and draw the drapes

There's a lot of noise outside, drowning so much noise
The men are suing each other, whisper the women,
Words of hate go up, the shouts of the merchants:
Oh, voices, stop it. Don't enter till you come to your nest.

My sister is weaving her silk cocoon
Like a skilled caterpillar: her cocoon is a dream.
With thread of gold she weaves the silken ball:
Spring is her life. I am already summer.

She counts with only fifteen Octobers in her eyes,
And so her eyes are so clean and clear;
She believes that storks, from strange countries,
Come down carrying beautiful babies with little red feet.

Who wants to enter now? Oh, is it you, good wind?
Do you want to watch her? Come in. But first,
Warm up a moment; don't go so soon
and freeze the gentle dream in her present.

Like you, it's well that the rest would like to come in
and watch that whiteness, those immaculate cheeks,
Those fine bags under her eyes, those simple lines,
You would see them, wind, and kneel and weep.

Oh, if you love her, be good a day, because she
flees from the light if it hurts her. Watch your words,
and your intention. Her soul, like wax, can be carved,
But like wax, too much touch destroys her.

Do as that star that watches her by night,
Filtering its eye through a crystalline veil:
That star rubs its eyelashes and spins,
But does not wake her, silent in the sky.

Fly away, if it's possible, for your snow-white orchard:
Piety for your soul! She is immaculate.
Piety for your soul! I know it all, it's true.
But she is like the sky: She knows nothing.

Alfonsina Storni

Parasites

I never thought that God had any form.
Absoute the life; and absolute the norm.
Never eyes: God sees with the stars.
Never hands: God touches with the seas.
Never tongue: God speaks with sparkles.
I will tell you, don't be startled;
I know that God has parasites: things and men.

Alfonsina Storni

Siesta

SOBRE la tierra seca
EI sol quemando cae:
Zumban los moscardones
Y las grietas se abren...
El viento no se mueve.
Desde la tierra sale
Un vaho como de horno;
Se abochorna la tarde
Y resopla cocida
Bajo el plomo del aire...
Ahogo, pesadez,
Cielo blanco; ni un ave.

Se oye un pequeño ruido:
Entre las pajas mueve
Su cuerpo amosaicado
Una larga serpiente.
Ondula con dulzura.
Por las piedras calientes
Se desliza, pesada,
Después de su banquete
De dulces y pequeños
Pájaros aflautados
Que le abultan el vientre.

Se enrosca poco a poco,
Muy pesada y muy blanda,
Poco a poco se duerme
Bajo la tarde blanca.
¿Hasta cuándo su sueño?
Ya no se escucha nada.
Larga siesta de víbora
Duerme también mi alma.

Alfonsina Storni

Sleep Peacefully

You said the word that enamors
My hearing. You already forgot. Good.
Sleep peacefully. Your face should
Be serene and beautiful at all hours.

When the seductive mouth enchants
It should be fresh, your speech pleasant;
For your office as lover it's not good
That many tears come from your face.

More glorious destinies reclaim you
That were brought, between the black wells
Of the dark circles beneath your eyes,
The seer in pain.

The bottom, summit of the beautiful victims!
The foolish spade of some barbarous king
Did more harm to the world and your statue.

Alfonsina Storni

Sweet Torture

My melancholy was gold dust in your hands;
On your long hands I scattered my life;
My sweetnesses remained clutched in your hands;
Now I am a vial of perfume, emptied

How much sweet torture quietly suffered,
When, my soul wrested with shadowy sadness,
She who knows the tricks, I passed the days
kissing the two hands that stifled my life

Alfonsina Storni

They've Come

Today my mother and sisters
came to see me.

I had been alone a long time
with my poems, my pride . . . almost nothing.

My sister---the oldest---is grown up,
is blondish. An elemental dream
goes through her eyes: I told the youngest
"Life is sweet. Everything bad comes to an end."

My mother smiled as those who understand souls
tend to do;
She placed two hands on my shoulders.
She's staring at me . . .
and tears spring from my eyes.

We ate together in the warmest room
of the house.
Spring sky . . . to see it
all the windows were opened.

And while we talked together quietly
of so much that is old and forgotten,
My sister---the youngest---interrupts:
"The swallows are flying by us."

Alfonsina Storni

Tu Me Quieres Blanca

TU ME QUIERES alba,
Me quieres de espumas,
Me quieres de nácar.
Que sea azucena
Sobre todas, casta.
De perfume tenue.
Corola cerrada

Ni un rayo de luna
Filtrado me haya.
Ni una margarita
Se diga mi hermana.
Tú me quieres nívea,
Tú me quieres blanca,
Tú me quieres alba.

Tú que hubiste todas
Las copas a mano,
De frutos y mieles
Los labios morados.
Tú que en el banquete
Cubierto de pámpanos
Dejaste las carnes
Festejando a Baco.
Tú que en los jardines
Negros del Engaño
Vestido de rojo
Corriste al Estrago.

Tú que el esqueleto
Conservas intacto
No sé todavía
Por cuáles milagros,
Me pretendes blanca
(Dios te lo perdone),
Me pretendes casta
(Dios te lo perdone),
¡Me pretendes alba!

Huye hacia los bosques,
Vete a la montaña;
Límpiate la boca;
Vive en las cabañas;
Toca con las manos
La tierra mojada;
Alimenta el cuerpo
Con raíz amarga;
Bebe de las rocas;
Duerme sobre escarcha;
Renueva tejidos
Con salitre y agua;
Habla con los pájaros
Y lévate al alba.
Y cuando las carnes
Te sean tornadas,
Y cuando hayas puesto
En ellas el alma
Que por las alcobas
Se quedó enredada,
Entonces, buen hombre,
Preténdeme blanca,
Preténdeme nívea,
Preténdeme casta.

Alfonsina Storni

What Would They Say?

What would the people say, reduced and empty,
If one fortuitous day, by some extreme fantasy,
I were to dye my hair silvery and violet, were to wear an old greek gown,
exchanging the comb
for a circlet of flowers: forget-me-nots or jasmines,
were to sing through the streets to the rhythm of the violins,
or were to read my verses aloud, traveling the plazas
my gusto freed of common gags?

Would they go to watch me, covering the sidewalks?
Would they burn me like they burned enchantresses?
Would they ring the bells, calling to mass?

In truth, when I think of it, I laugh a little.

Alfonsina Storni