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After Love

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After Love

Lying beside you here, in the room's half-light,
like the silence that stays after making love,
I ascend lightly from the depths of my rest
up to your delicate edges, extinguished, sweetly existing.
And with my hand I stroke the gentle limits of your living, now with-
drawn,
and I feel the quiet musical truth of your body, that a moment ago, grown
wild, sang like fire.
Sleep has allowed your flesh—which lost its lasting form in the act of love,
dissolving upward in the hungry uneven flame—
to return again to the true shape of its body, rebuilding itself within its
limits.

Touching those borders, smooth, undamaged, warm, delicately naked,
one knows that his love goes on with her life.
Love is a sudden destruction, combustion that threatens
the pure being we love, the one our fire wounds,
but once withdrawn from her liquefied brilliance
we recognize her again, we see her perfect life made newly whole,
the warm and quiet life whose surface called us.
Here is love's flawless vessel, filled,
shining and gold in the opulent calm of its blood.
Here are the breasts, the belly, her round thigh, her quiet foot,
and here the shoulders, the neck like a soft new feather,
the cheek not scorched, not burned, but pure in its newborn pink,
and the forehead where the daily thought of our love is living, keeping its
lucid vigil.
And in the center, sealing the bright face which the yellow afternoon warms
casually,
is the subtle mouth, torn slightly, pure in the light.
Oh frightening key to the source of fire.
I graze your tender skin with these fingers that fear and know,
as I place my mouth on your extinguished hair.

(From *Historia del corazón*, 1953)