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SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS  
SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ

# **DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL**

## **NOCHE OSCURA DEL ALMA**

SONGS WHOSE DATE AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION IS UNCERTAIN  
AND ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IN JAIL  
FROM DECEMBER OF THE YEAR 1577 TO AUGUST 1578  
OR SOME DAYS AFTER ESCAPING, AND ARE FURTHERMORE SAID  
TO HAVE BEEN PRODUCED IN VOICE AND IN WRITING  
BEFORE THE YEAR 1582. THE SAME WHICH SERVED  
TO MAKE THE ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL  
AND THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL  
THESE SONGS ARE SO CALLED BY THIS NAME  
BUT ARE RIGHTLY NAMED SONGS OF THE SOUL  
THAT REJOICES IN HAVING ARRIVED AT THE HIGH STATE  
OF PERFECTION, WHICH IS THE UNION WITH GOD, THROUGH  
THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL DENIAL BY THE SAME AUTHOR.  
THEY ARE PRESENTED HERE IN OLD SPANISH AND IN ENGLISH

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IN MEXICO, IN THE YEAR 2000. THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

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CANCIONES DEL ALMA QUE SE GOZA DE AUER LLEGADO  
AL ALTO ESTADO DE LA PERFECCION, QUE ES LA UNION CON DIOS,  
POR EL CAMINO DE LA NEGACION ESPIRITUAL DEL MESMO AUTHOR.

En una noche oscura,  
con ansias, en amores inflamada,  
¡o dichosa ventura!,  
salí sin ser notada,  
estando ya mi casa sosegada.

A oscuras y segura  
por la secreta escala, disfrazada,  
¡o dichosa ventura!,  
a oscuras y encelada,  
estando ya mi casa sosegada.

En la noche dichosa,  
en secreto, que nadie me ueya,  
ni yo miraba cosa,  
sin otra luz y guía  
sino la que en el corazón ardía.

Aquísta me guíava  
más cierto que la luz del mediodía  
adonde me esperava  
quien yo bien me sabía,  
en parte donde nadie parecía.

¡O noche que guíaste!,  
¡o noche, amable más que el aluorada!,  
¡o noche que juntaste  
Amado con amada,  
amada en el Amado transformada!

En mi pecho florido,  
que entero para él solo se guardaba,  
allí quedó dormido,  
y yo le regalava,  
y el ventalle de cedros ayre daua.

El ayre de la almena,  
quando yo sus cabellos esparcía,  
con su mano serena  
en mi cuello hería,  
y todos mis sentidos suspendía.

Quedéme y olvidéme,  
el rostro recliné sobre el Amado;  
cesó todo y dejéme,  
dejando mi cuidado  
entre las açucenas olvidado.

IVAN DELA CRVZ.

SONGS OF THE SOUL THAT REJOICES IN HAVING ARRIVED  
AT THE HIGH STATE OF PERFECTION, WHICH IS THE UNION WITH GOD,  
THROUGH THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL DENIAL BY THE SAME AUTHOR

On a dark night,  
Being anxious, and inflamed with love,  
O gracious chance!,  
I left and went unnoticed,  
Leaving my home in quiet.

In darkness and betrusting  
A hidden escalade I climbed, disguised,  
O gracious chance!,  
In darkness, under cover,  
Leaving my home in quiet.

In joyous night,  
In secret, no one having seen me,  
Nor did I look upon a something,  
Having no light nor guidance  
But that which blazed within a heart.

And ever did it guide me  
Truer than light amid the day  
To there where did await  
He whom I knew well would wait,  
There where go no passers-by.

O night, you that guided me!,  
O night, more loved by me than morning!,  
O night that gathered  
The Loved and the beloved,  
And the beloved did change into the Loved One!

In my hopeful breast,  
That only for Himself had kept itself,  
There did He sleep,  
And Him I tended to,  
And waving cedars waved their windy branches.

The air above the towers,  
When its hair fell between my fingers,  
With careful hand  
Did bite my neck,  
And every sense made halt.

I stayed there and forgot me,  
And laid my head on my Beloved;  
Everything halted and I let it,  
Leaving my pain  
Forlorn among the whitest flowers.

JOHN OF THE CROSS.

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Notes: Old spanish used different spellings and prosody. Sinaëreses are the rule between words, and not the exception as in modern spanish; double l's [ll] are pronounced not like an i or a y in english, but like a single l followed by an i, and very slowly at that. Accentuation is also different.

This text follows that of the 1618 edition in Alcalá, which in turn is reproduced in the edition: San Juan de la Cruz. Poesías. Edited by Paola Elia, with an introductory study and textual notes. Madrid, Spain, 1990. Old spanish was very musical, and spoken slowly, probably with a distinct pronunciation that denoted a profound knowledge of language and poetry. The meaning of each image and metaphor, ideally, flows with ease through the syntax of each verse. Modern spanish, like the ancestral castilian, has produced a great number of local or even national dialects, some of which even today recall dialects spoken in 16th and 17th century Spain and Portugal.