

ANGELA AND THE EIGHT THOUSAND POLICE

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(abridged version by Pep Anton Gómez)

The dictator Creon had signs nailed to all the walls in all the kingdom's cities for everyone to read: ARMED AND DANGEROUS.

He gathered his men and told them,

“Bring her to me. I will lock her away in the deepest prison. And I will order 8,000 policemen to guard it.

Then her beauty will no longer exist, because no one will be able to see it.

The gods have given me the three gifts that determine power: I am male, I am white, I am rich.

And because I am male, white and rich, I will uphold the cause that I will call *order*.”

Angela's voice rang out, clear and unmistakable.

“These are the laws that you have laid down, and they are not laws, but weapons of injustice. Look at my hands, Creon.

I have never used a weapon or any of the instruments of torture used by your princes.”

When she was arrested, Angela bore no weapons, nor did she put up any resistance.

It was not true, then, that she was armed, but she was dangerous.

Creon was afraid of her intelligence, of her tall, serene beauty.

“Women should be in the kitchen! Or warming the bed of a warrior!”

he screamed, red in the face with anger and fear.

“I will not allow women to rise up like a flock of free birds. And you I will lock up, because you dared to defy me.”

Angela was so beautiful, her beauty was like a cry, like a challenge.

It was a laugh that made the whey-faced scholars, cowards, waverers, and skeptics blush.

It was a beauty that came from far away,

from African lands,

from the secular exercise of slavery,

from the modulation of Bach's chorales with the bluesy rhythm of avenging trumpets.

She stretched out her hands, and the 8,000 officers scrambled to be the first to reach her and put on the handcuffs.

And how night fell over Angela's dark beauty,

over her words,

over her thoughts!

An impossibly thick night and silence.

The cement for her grave was mixed from that darkness and silence.

Eight thousand policemen stood guard around the prison. A soft, craven voice interrogated her.

"You are a heretic; you corrupt.

You stroll through the streets of our cities, Black and beautiful.

You lecture in the classrooms of our universities,

wickedly turning the truths of wise men back on us, Black and beautiful.

Everyone listens to you, and they believe you when you say: look at me; I am Black and beautiful.

What will you do with your beauty when no one can see you?"

"No one can see me, but I am Black and beautiful."

"*Black and beautiful!* It is a cry of revolt," said the voice.

"Cries of revolt are true;

they are the cries of objective conditions.

My Blackness and my beauty are a slap to your white face."

“No one will ever see your Blackness or your beauty again.”

“Everyone will see the truth:

black and beautiful

bella i negra

belle et noir

bella e nera...

Because you have spread my image around the world. You, with your ugly, pasty face!”

And the voice went on,

“Enemy of order, diabolical woman! You are an ambassador for Hell! Your law is terror, and you have armed Blacks against white justice.

Insult me if you wish. No trumpet solo will ring out here; no one will recite to you the perverse reasons why all men are equal.”

Angela extended her wrists and, in the dark, white hands removed the handcuffs.

They led her down passageway after passageway until they came to the open space of a circus. They made her sit on a stool in the center of the ring.

She pressed her lips shut in contempt.

She turned her head from right to left to take in the lily-white judges in the stands.

“Angela! Where are your voices?”

said Creon.

“My voices will never be silenced, Creon, you bloated fool.

I was living a quiet, happy life, because – privileged and rich – I had inherited your laws, your science, your morals, your religion, your aesthetics.

I learned the magic words that you use and display in front of the poor and wretched of the Earth.

You gather the poor to you, consumed by the leprosy of ignorance, and call out the magic words that you own.

You shout: TRUTH, JUSTICE, GOODNESS, HONESTY, DECENCY, BEAUTY.

But, mostly, ORDER, OOOORRDERRRR, and even more OOOOOORRRRRDERRRRRR.

And the din of machine guns underscores the magic word,
and the instruments of torture embellish the magic word,
and the lashes across the cowardly backs beat the rhythm of the magic word.

And you, Creon, you lie and are an idiot.

You think you will always have Truth, Justice, and Beauty at your feet, like trained dogs in the service of your police.

Where are your dogs now, Creon? Sick them on me if you dare.”

“Insolent creature, dark as the night! You have risen up against us, and you will pay for your crime with a slow and lonely death.”

“And what crime do you dare accuse me of, Creon, you with your dirty hands?”

“You have armed your brothers against justice. Your Soledad brother killed the judge, that is, he killed justice, he killed order and peace.”

“Poor Soledad brother, brother in solitude...”

said Angela in a clear voice.

“When we were little, it seemed like God above had ears for us.

But we learned soon enough that he was not listening to us.

My brother was brave and good. He wanted to trade your judge for JUSTICE.

For that justice you have written about in books and that cries out above your ignominy.”

“You put the weapons in your brother’s hands...”

“No. I would never have placed weapons in his beautiful, Black hands, because he was young and good.

And he was also my little brother, my brother in solitude, too brave to live.

I did not arm him, because I love his armed hands and I will not leave him alone.”

“You have confessed! You have confessed!”

Creon’s shrill voice screamed.

Angela’s lips moved, but no one could hear her.

The victory song of the 8,000 police, the barking dogs, and Creon's crowing shrieks drowned out her voice.

One after another, the lights faded out, and Angela's beauty dissolved in the dark night

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