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O Spain, Take This Cup from Me

Children of the world,
if Spain falls, —I say, to you I say—
if she falls
down from the sky,
catch her arm of roasting flesh
in a sling between two sheets of earth' s metal;
children, how old that curved brow!
how soon in that sun what I told you of!
how quick at breast the ancient rumbles!
how aged your 2 in the school notebook!

Children of the world,
Mother Spain is here cradling her own womb;
she is our teacher with her switches,
she is mother and teacher,
cross and wood, because she brings you
the dizzying heights and division, and sums, children.
She is self-contained, you prosecuting fathers!

If she falls, I say, to you I say,
if Spain falls, the earth tumbling down,
children, how you will stop growing!
how the year is going to punish the month!
how your mouth will not grow more than ten teeth,
your diphthongs will be switched, your medals will wail!
How the roasted lamb's hide will go on and on
tied by the paw to the great inkpot!
How you are going to descend the steps of the alphabet
until you arrive at the letter in which pain was born!

Children,
sons of warriors, just then,
lower your voice, for Spain at this moment is dividing up
her powers between the rule of the beast,
the flowering things, the comets, and mankind.

Lower your voice, for she is
still with her severity, which is great, not knowing
what to do, and she has in her hand
the talking skull, and it talks and talks,
the skull, that one with braided hair,
the skull, that one that is alive!

Lower your voice, I tell you;
lower your voice, the song all of syllables, the cry
of matter and the low babel of the pyramids,
the empty skulls' song that walks carrying two stones!
Lower your breath, and if
her arm comes down,
and if the switches swish, if it is night,
if the heavens fit into two earthly Purgatories,
if there is a racket in the doors' voices,
if I am late,
if you don't see anybody and if the unsharpened pencils
frighten you, and if your Mother
Spain falls, —I say, to you I say—
leave, children of the world. Go and find her!

Excerpted from "España, Aparta de Mé Este Cález," 1940.