

The Bones of Love and Death (Fragment*)

by Hugo Argüelles



Drawings by Gabriel Macotela

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Jailed by order of Agustín de Iturbide, two insurgents, husband and wife Leobardo and Lucinda, await death in an imprisonment that takes them on a journey to madness, to the rediscovery of their erotic passion and the rectification of their ideological and existential convictions. Filled with poetry and a language that recovers the popular feelings of the Mexican people, *Los huesos del amor y de la muerte* (The Bones of Love and Death) digs into Mexico's history and its idiosyncrasy, desacralizing both.

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Suddenly they look at each other and stop crushing bones. They are almost covered in pieces of bone and dust; hair mussed, sweaty, almost pathetic and grotesque. They look at each other a moment, as though taking it in.

LUCINDA: Leo... Just look at us! If anyone saw us, they'd say, "This is a perfect pair of poor devils!"

LEOBARDO: (*Going to open the curtain.*) After all is said and done, I still think what we did was heroic! I still think so, despite how we lost our composure in doing it!

LUCINDA: I'm grotesque! (*Laughs.*)

LEOBARDO: So am I, but grotesque is the flip side of heroic.

LUCINDA: (*Cautiously closing the curtain and the window and shaking out her dress.*) I really don't seem to care what happens to this dress. A rag full of graveyard dust...

LEOBARDO: No, Lucinda, it's not a rag anymore: it has been magnified (*Opens the curtain.*) Look at it in its true light; it has become part of a transcendental rite!

LUCINDA: That's true! Once again...it's your way of discovering what's true about things. (*She*

no longer dares to close the curtains and now she seems to assume the inevitable.)

LEOBARDO: (*To himself, as he drinks.*) Like us,...incorporated by these elements into a different dimension, beyond everything immediate and material...

LUCINDA: (*Midway between resigned and amazed.*) Yes, go on Leo. (*Briefly, quickly and avidly.*) I love listening to you!

He smiles. He sidles over to the window and says suddenly, roguish and playful.

LEOBARDO: (*Suddenly.*) Wouldn't you like to make believe that we're two joyful skulls?

LUCINDA: What do you mean?

LEOBARDO: Yes, two *calacas*, two death's-heads having a good time because they know they are two...happy Deaths.

LUCINDA. But... (*She looks at him and starts to smile.*) Again, your internal music! Oh, Leo!

LEOBARDO: It just came to me...and all I'd have to do is use this plaster covering our faces now and paint a black circle around each eye... and a corn cob over our mouths to look like teeth!

LUCINDA: Of course! And we would become our own skeletons seemingly anticipating their own death!

LEOBARDO: Or mocking it!

LUCINDA: What a great idea! Wonderful, my love!

LEOBARDO: Bring me my paint box, then! I'll create a couple of pastel skulls!

LUCINDA: I have never understood why they call that technique "pastels" when you use chalk.



It sounds as absurd as if I made “plaster candies.”

LEOBARDO: Because you get “pastel” colors! The ones you and I will sport, like two death’s-heads that people decorate and make into ornaments on the Day of the Dead!

Lucinda smiles and enthusiastically enters the bedroom.

LEOBARDO: *(To the bones.)* To die by her side and she with me... And to die together, enjoying ourselves! *(He caresses the powder and spreads it almost with devotion on his face.)* Yes, and be-

cause death is too real, we have to meet it with fantasy. And of course, to also feel above its power! *(Laughs.)* We will be two fantastic lovers who play with their own death, making it joyful. *(He opens the curtain and shouts out at it, challenging and mocking.)* Thank you, then, Agustín! This will be another victory over you!

He withdraws, looking decided. Enter Lucinda with a box of paints. Leobardo takes out pastel sticks and begins to draw the skull on Lucinda’s face; then he indicates that she should draw black circles around his eyes. She does. As they make each other up, they kiss and laugh, having fun. Then, Leobardo opens other boxes with colored chalk



—which in the play can be lipsticks— and indicates to Lucinda that she should use them to continue making him up.

LUCINDA: Are we also going to use all of these?

LEOBARDO: Yes, Lucinda! We said two festive death's-heads and that's what ours will be like! But also, it will seem like a synthesis of the love we have for each other! (*Laughs.*) So rich in words and colors! So...! (*He makes her up even more.*)

LUCINDA: You'll tell me any crazy thing...like before when we used to play at telling our dreams...
LEOBARDO: And you will answer with what-

ever comes into your mind at the same time that you paint me with any color you like; this is my death mask! (*Drinks.*)

LUCINDA: So it can be a colorful death!

LEOBARDO: And I'll decorate yours in my own way! Ready?

LUCINDA: (*Agreeing, very excited.*) Leo... please...like in those games of ours, make this one into a...delirious ritual.

LEOBARDO: (*He agrees at the same time that he makes her up.*) You remember? Come, my love, it

seems that the time has come to close ourselves off...

Close ourselves off, one and the other, from the world.

Close ourselves one inside the other;
close ourselves tightly, forming
a single burning closure.

LUCINDA: And consume ourselves in it: closing ourselves up.

She begins to make him up.

LEOBARDO: Joined...like a succession of echoes...or of reflections that multiply when they meet...

LUCINDA: Carried above this reality... *(She continues to make him up.)*

LEOBARDO: Become part of everything we have... *(She makes him up more.)* experienced.

LUCINDA: And that returned to us... *(They look at each other, increasingly fascinated.)*

LEOBARDO: As we really are. *(Drinks.)*

LUCINDA: And as we always were. *(Drinks.)*

LEOBARDO: As we always knew we were. *(They caress.)*

LUCINDA: In this meeting, this dream, this daring... *(She makes him up.)*

LEOBARDO: This knowing ourselves and enjoying ourselves as never before... *(He makes her up.)*

LUCINDA: This feeling and more feeling, mad with joy... *(She drinks.)*

LEOBARDO: *(Turning.)* And you and I...turning with the dust and the symbols...in a spiral with complicated, accomplice turns...like all secrets! *(He laughs, drinks and kisses her enthusiastically.)*

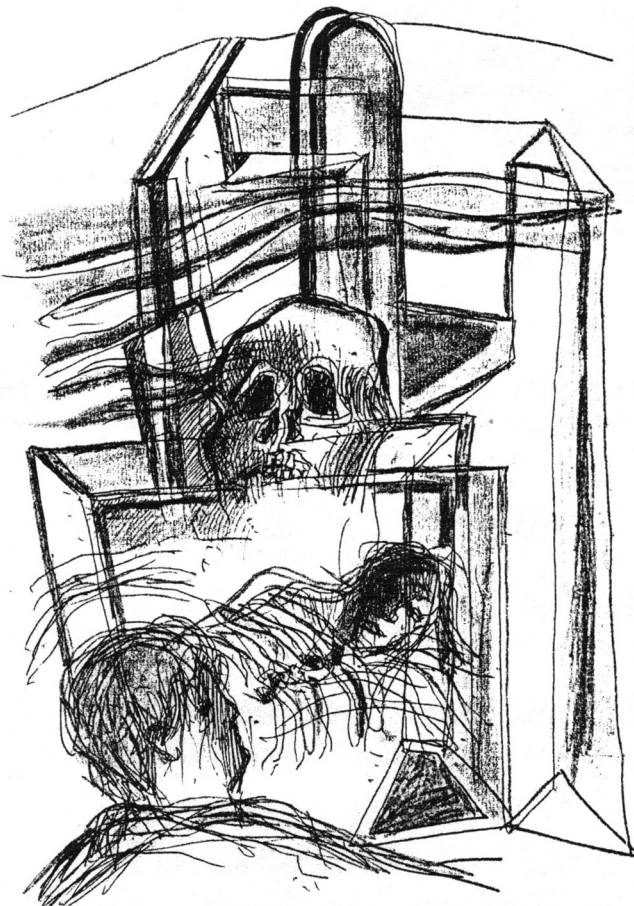
LUCINDA: You and I...beyond...more and more and closer and closer together...time and time again...in an interminable, continual spree!

They turn. Both are, in effect, festive, "fantastic" skulls.

LEOBARDO: Like a shuddering gallop among torn-apart clouds!

LUCINDA: Like sonorous laughter or warm memories!

LEOBARDO: Don't you feel as if we were leaving our bodies...and yet...as if both of us...were even more joined together?



LUCINDA: Yes! I feel you beyond what I can touch in you!

LEOBARDO: That's right, my darling. We're leaving and where we already are, I know that I can love you even more!

LUCINDA: Now I know! This is like a lasting brilliance!

LEOBARDO: The nearness of our death...gives us this happiness. *(Drinks.)* And its presence...a banquet of rejoicing!

LUCINDA: Like a flock of lights illuminating themselves...

LEOBARDO: So others, more fleeting, can blossom! *(Laughs.)*

LUCINDA: Or it's like the dream of a dream...

LEOBARDO: That finds itself asleep without knowing it! *(Laughs.)*

LUCINDA: Or that knows it's a dream and doesn't want to ever wake up!

LEOBARDO: *(Laughs.)* A dream that you drink. *(Drinks.)*

LUCINDA: *(Drinks.)* And spills and makes us believe all the fantasies it invents! *(She makes herself up even more with different colors.)*

LEOBARDO: Or the emotions it plays with...until making them delirious! *(Also making her up more.)*

LUCINDA: Like now! *(She kisses him.)*

LEOBARDO: And it takes us and joins us and breaks us! *(Laughs.)*

LUCINDA: And launches us into space!

LEOBARDO: Like two streamers in a knot!

LUCINDA: You and I!

LEOBARDO: And this joyful interior dance!

LUCINDA: From our kisses...looks...!

LEOBARDO: Colors...and words!

They look at each other: they are two marvelous, richly decorated skulls. They turn, arms around each other, laughing and kissing. Suddenly, two shots ring out, brutal and surprising. They bend over. They look at each other. They both put their hands to their hearts. They look at them: they're dripping blood. They approach each other and as they do, very slowly, they start to laugh as they embrace.

LUCINDA: It was the... ones spying on us...

LEOBARDO: Yes, Agustín always wanted to mock my dreams...but now I've beaten him... *(He smiles ironically.)*

LUCINDA: Did you know? Did you know that they would kill us?

LEOBARDO: *(Nodding his head yes.)* But I picked going together.

LUCINDA: So did I. And without saying anything to you.

They look at each other. They laugh.

LEOBARDO: Me, too. How crazy!

She nods yes. They laugh. Two more shots are fired.

