

“La fleur que tu m’avais jetée” (Here is the flower that you gave me) The Flower Song;, CARMEN, Act II; 1875; music by Georges Bizet; libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, based on the novella by the same name by Prosper Mérimée.

SYNOPSIS: Don José has spent time in prison for letting Carmen escape. They meet in Lila Pastia’s café and, to his delight, she dances for him. But their pleasure is interrupted by the bugle’s call for Don José to return to his barracks. Carmen mocks the soldier for his loyalty to his duty and taunts him for not loving her. In response, he shows her the withered flower she had thrown to him when they first met.

DON JOSE

La fleur que tu m’avais jetée,
dans ma prison m’était restée,
flétrie et sèche, cette fleur
gardait toujours sa douce odeur .
Et pendant des heures entières,
ur mes yeux fermant mes paupieres.
De cette odeur je m’enivrais,
et dans la nuit, je te voyais.
Je me prenais à te maudire,
à te detester, à me dire,
Pourquoi faut-il que le destin
l’ait mise là, sur mon chemin?
Puis, je m’accusais de blasphème,
et je ne sentais en moi-même
je ne sentais qu’un seul désir,
un seul désir, un seul espoir:
te revoir, O, Carmen,
oui, te revoir!
Car tu n’avais eu qu’à paraître,
qu’à jeter un regard sur moi
pour t’emparer de tout mon être,
et j’étais une chose à toi!
Carmen, je t’aime.

Here is the flower that you gave me,
with magic powers to enslave me,
and in my cell, this faded bloom
still kept the smell of sweet perfume.
While for endless hours I caressed it,
on my burning eyelids I pressed it.
My head grew dizzy from the air,
and in the darkness, I saw you there.
I cursed the day that I had met you,
detested you, tried to forget you.
I asked myself why it should be
destiny arranged you’d meet with me?
Then, hating the words I was saying,
I only felt that I was praying
for just one wish, one sole desire,
one hope alone set me on fire:
to see you, oh, Carmen,
see you again!
For all I needed was one glimpse of you,
when our eyes met for a moment or two,
that’s all it took and my poor heart knew
I would be yours until I die!
Carmen, I love you so.

--From “The Eternal Appeal of CARMEN,” a course for Lifelong Learners at UC Santa Cruz,
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