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IB English SL

## Pursuit

Dans le fond des forêts votre image me suit.  
RACINE

There is a panther stalks me down;  
One day I'll have my death of him,  
His greed has set the woods aflame,  
He prowls more lordly than the sun,  
Most soft, most suavely glides that step,  
Advancing always at my back;  
From gaunt hemlock, rooks croak havoc;  
The hunt is on, and sprung the trap.  
Flayed by thorns I trek the rocks,  
Haggard through the hot white noon.  
Along red network of his veins  
What fires run, what craving wakes?

Insatiate, he ransacks the land  
Condemned by our ancestral fault,  
Crying: blood, let blood be spilt;  
Meat must glut his mouth's raw wound.  
Keen the rending teeth and sweet  
The singeing fury of his fur;  
His kisses parch, each paw's a briar,  
Doom consummates that appetite.  
In the wake of this fierce cat,  
Kindled like torches for his joy,  
Charred and ravened women lie,  
Become his starving body's bait.

Now hills hatch menace, spawning shade;  
Midnight cloaks the sultry grove;  
The black marauder, hauled by love  
On fluent haunches, keeps my speed,  
Behind snarled thickets of my eyes  
Lurks the lithe one; in dreams' ambush  
Bright those claws that mar the flesh  
And hungry, hungry, those taut thighs.  
His ardour snares me, lights the trees,  
And I run flaring in my skin;  
What lull, what cool can lap me in  
When burns and brands that yellow gaze?

I hurl my heart to halt his pace,  
To quench his thirst I squander blood;  
He eats, and still his need seeks food,  
Compels a total sacrifice.  
His voice waylays me, spells a trance,  
The gutted forest falls to ash;  
Appalled by secret want, I rush  
From such assault of radiance,  
Entering the tower of my fears,  
I shut my doors on that dark guilt,  
I bolt the door, each door I bolt.  
Blood quickens, gonging in my ears:

The panther's tread is on the stairs,  
Coming up and up the stairs.

### Organizing Principles:

- Contrast being targeted by this man, but also wanting him
- Passion, Love, Infatuation
- Greed, Hunger
- Animalistic/Primitive Courtship
- Human and Animal Behaviour

**Comment [C1]:** The effort to secure or attain. Hard consonant %p+ and %t+ suggest the unsettled nature of the poem. Metaphorical description of courtship between Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. Persona: Sylvia Plath herself; Structure: Each stanza is 12 lines long (except last stanza), all end-stopped, with one enjambment, each line has approximately 7-8 syllables. Mostly in present tense which removes uncertainties/unreliability of past or future.

**Comment [C2]:** %In the depths of forest your image follows me. %From tragedy theatrical play, Phèdre. (Subject - Greek mythology) Translated by Ted Hughes just before he died. Whole poem revolves around this line.

**Comment [C3]:** Black coloured cat . possible image of a tuxedo. Ted Hughes had earlier published a poem, %The Jaguar+ which related human behaviour to animals in a zoo. Similarly, Plath describes courtship in its primitive, biologically-based form.

**Comment [C4]:** Common use of colons and semi-colons . create long sentences with linked ideas, lists which show intensity of emotions felt . it never stops; always continuous. Relatively short, choppy statements keeps poem in motion but strangely lacks romanticism which opposes stereotypical views of relationships. Crude honesty!

**Comment [C5]:** The one line in future tense. Possibly saying the cause of her death will be him, (not romantic), but could suggest she will one day give in and stop playing %hard to get+; as he is a predator. Ironically, he played a role in her suicide.

**Comment [C6]:** Motif of fire and heat: suggests passion, but also tone of destruction considering she has represented Ted Hughes as a carnivorous predator. Reflects the unstable nature of the relationship.

**Comment [C7]:** How successful he is in dominating over things . subtle. Aura of magnificence. He was already a better established writer than she was. Possible admiration.

**Comment [C8]:** Slick, charismatic person . yet he still has to approach her where she's vulnerable; %at my back+ which corresponds to the panther/hunter image. May refer to the fact that she was drunk when she met him at party.

**Comment [C9]:** Hemlock . a type of poison, %Croak [of] havoc+ may be warning signs. She was warned of Ted Hughes' reputation as the %biggest seducer+.

**Comment [C10]:** Showing the one side where she is victimized by his pursuit of her.

**Comment [C11]:** Craving . no logical basis for this want, mostly instinct based . possibly demonstrating the crude animal drive to reproduce.

**Comment [C12]:** Motif of insatiability, greed: linked to instinct of killing to eat. Actually may be an exclusive human trait.

**Comment [C13]:** Destructive verbs used possibly showing slightly sadistic nature of humans.

**Comment [C14]:** Relates animal behaviour to humans. Motif of food and hunger: this hunger is a description of a passionate, spontaneous infatuation.

**Comment [C15]:** Possibly suggesting this infatuation is under the influence of alcohol and other factors - Kisses described as %parch+ because of dehydration (from the alcohol). Or this parched mouth of his has been deprived of this thirst of women showing the intensity of this hunt.

**Comment [C16]:** Usually a word associated with marriage. Although ironically used here to say there is element of danger and inevitable misfortune which feeds this want for one another.

**Comment [C17]:** Similar line to Romeo and Juliet %O! She doth teach the torches to burn bright.+ Beyond all this hungry, primitive imagery, there is a real romantic notion, more than infatuation, but real love. %Kindled+. relatively soft consonants sounds, however fluidity of ... [1]

**Comment [C18]:** %Women lie+, taking on a passive role, they have desire for a man as they are burnt and hungry.

**Comment [C19]:** He is a %marauder+ which is a bi-product of love, a burden or nuisance of love. %Bad guy+ appeal? Possibly suggests confusion and irrationality of this infatuation.

**Comment [C20]:** Even under the cover of night, he can still follow her. Tone: Malevolent, stalking. Enforces animalistic drive of relationship.

**Comment [C21]:** Darkness referred to as bushes, shrubs which block vision enforcing primitive/animalistic nature of the pursuit.

**Comment [C22]:** The vulnerability we face when dreaming because our subconscious wants are then apparent. Reinforces cover of night.

**Comment [C23]:** Double meaning: tightly drawn, strained or tense or in good order or condition. Monosyllabic and piercing . disrupts fluency of line

**Comment [C24]:** Eventual submission

**Comment [C25]:** Pronouns: %I+ and %he/his+ show that there is a distance between these two individuals. There is no togetherness suggesting superficiality of relationship so far.

**Comment [C26]:** Possible reference to infamous %cheek bite+.

**Comment [C27]:** The cover of the forest and night is now gone because of the light from the fiery passion reveals/exposes her. She has now been %caught+.

**Comment [C28]:** This relationship has caused a loss of innocence, or taken away or some aspect of value to Plath as an individual.

**Comment [C29]:** Change from forest to man-made %stairs+ showing connection to reality.

Similar line to Romeo and Juliet %! She doth teach the torches to burn bright.+Beyond all this hungry, primitive imagery, there is a real romantic notion, more than infatuation, but real love. %kindled+. relatively soft consonants sounds, however fluidity of sentence is disrupted by %torches+which is harsher sounding.