

Vergil and Flora libretto

Vergil

Arms and the... No, no, don't go!
My poem! My poem!
Do not go away!
Arms! Arms! Wasn't it?
Or alarms!
What was it now? I can't recall...
Voice of my dream, Don't go away!
Voice of my poem, Dream of my own, Stay!

Inspiration fled. The dream is gone.
Only fragments left, the muffled sound of something like, what was it?
Harms... armies... a man... I can not remember...
I must write down what phrases I can save.

Flora! Flora!
Flora! Quick! My manuscript!

Flora

Coming, Master! Coming!
Poor Flora!
As a girl I thought it would be daring
to roam and see the world, be wild and devil-may-caring.
Surprise!
I ran away from Sparta, and now I'm Vergil's slave.
A martyr for his art. ah Ah . . . and it's no rave.
No days off and never tipped.

Vergil

Flora! Quick! My manuscript!

Flora

Here is my Master, Vergil, the famous Latin poet,
who at the slightest urge'll take a word and quid pro quo it,
till the syllables turn lyric and the words become a poem . . .

Vergil

Flora!

Flora

It's too bad he's so hysteric and he sure could use a comb.
For five years he's been working on a tale of ancient Rome.
The hottest property in town, this twenty-five pound tome.

It's heavy literature.
The emperor Augustus has ordered a recital.
The shame is, all that Vergil's finished so far is the title.

Vergil

Ah! Ummmmm... Arms... Arms... Arms... Ar... ahhh... mmmsss...
Gone! I heard the whole tale in a dream.
Now nothing, nothing at all.

Flora

And what precisely was it you expected from a dream?

Vergil

A little help, a line or two from the spirits of sleep.

Flora

I see. You were hoping for your poem to be ghost written.

Vergil

I am the personal poet of the Emperor Augustus.
He wants a new poetic work of bravery and justice.
Next week he wants to see it. Next week he wants to see it.
I call it "The Aeneid"!

Flora

Oh! Do let me read it!

Vergil

No! You can't see it! It's not finished yet.
I've only got a working draft and it is mostly prose.
If you promise to be silent I'll relate to you the violent
and tragical story that makes up my poem. . .

The Tale of Dido and Aeneas.

Flora

And how many lines have you written?

Vergil

Seven

Flora

In how many months?

Vergil

Well . . . eleven.

I get a great idea, and go sit down to write it,
but get a sentence down and really can't abide it!
I write another word, then have a cup of wine,
then have a couple bottles and think about a line.
I think a little more and try a paragraph.
Then read what came before and tear the sheets in half.
So that I'm left with ink and empty scraps of paper.
With nothing left to think I snuff the smoking taper.
I promise that tomorrow after a little walk,
I'll write or steal or borrow... Flora, it's writer's block!

Flora

Not to worry, Master. I've a potion that can help revive the flow of your poetic thought . .

Vergil

But there is more . . . I hear them, Flora.

Flora

Hear? Who?

Vergil

Voices in my dream. They sing my poem to me.

Flora

No need to blow a fuse. Master, that's the Muse!

The past is never truly past.
Whatever we have done stays done,
forever here imprinted in the air.
Some men can hear those echoes as the Muse that sings us poetry.
The greatest artist does not alter the echoes of the living past.
The lesser craftsmen mangle their drafts and force the voices in a cast.
I have a potion which has the power to bring those echoes back to mind.
If you dare to face your hero as he stood once on a time,
Drink this! Drink this!

Vergil

Would it be right to take a sip?

Flora

There's no need for a conniption, for I've got a legal prescription.
And the truth is most of our highest rated writers these days are medicated!

But beware! What you see here will be the truth.
It might not be the happy scene you hope to prove.

Vergil

I'd pay any fee . . . see? I feel queasy . . . uneasy.
Woman! You have poisoned me!

No, wait! I'm not dead yet.
I hear the magic voices . . . my poem!
I must go! Quick! Quick! Where's my manusss . . .

Flora

Pretty strong drink! He's in a trance, not asleep.
For him a couple of seconds will seem like a week.
Ten seconds . . . Time is up.
Master, master wake! What did your vision say?

Vergil

Voice of my dream, voice of my poem . . . all has gone wrong!

Flora

No, poet.
All can be set right with this elixir of art.

Vergil

Get some elixir for me!

Flora

It's not a drug that you can buy or steal. This one's for real.
No dream, no drug and no magic can hand you your new poem.
Work is the cure. Elixir pure. Dig deep in art!

Vergil

Art? Yes, art! The past is never truly past.
Art has the power to recast the sorry stories of our past,
and forge from our present tangled sorrow doors to a glorious morrow.

It's time to begin. Flora! My pen!!