

### **Fever 103**

Sylvia Plath  
1962

Pure? What does it mean?  
The tongues of hell  
Are dull, dull as the triple

Tongues of dull, fat Cerberus  
Who wheezes at the gate. Incapable  
Of licking clean

The aguey tendon, the sin, the sin.  
The tinder cries.  
The indelible smell

Of a snuffed candle!  
Love, love, the low smokes roll  
From me like Isadora's scarves, I'm in a fright

One scarf will catch and anchor in the wheel,  
Such yellow sullen smokes  
Make their own element. They will not rise,

But trundle round the globe  
Choking the aged and the meek,  
The weak

Hothouse baby in its crib,  
The ghastly orchid  
Hanging its hanging garden in the air,

Devilish leopard!  
Radiation turned it white  
And killed it in an hour.

Greasing the bodies of adulterers  
Like Hiroshima ash and eating in.  
The sin. The sin.

Darling, all night  
I have been flickering, off, on, off, on.  
The sheets grow heavy as a lecher's kiss.

Three days. Three nights.  
Lemon water, chicken  
Water, water make me retch.

I am too pure for you or anyone.  
Your body  
Hurts me as the world hurts God. I am a lantern——

My head a moon  
Of Japanese paper, my gold beaten skin  
Infinitely delicate and infinitely expensive.

Does not my heat astound you! And my light!  
All by myself I am a huge camellia  
Glowing and coming and going, flush on flush.

I think I am going up,  
I think I may rise——  
The beads of hot metal fly, and I love, I

Am a pure acetylene  
Virgin  
Attended by roses,

By kisses, by cherubim,  
By whatever these pink things mean!  
Not you, nor him

Nor him, nor him  
(My selves dissolving, old whore petticoats)——  
To Paradise.