

## The Woman of My Dreams

by Manuel Valero

The woman of my dreams

moves in the shadows

with her eyes fixed on me

Hidden in the crowd

her smile slithers through the shuffle

I wage war with beasts to find the woman of my dreams

The drumming of boots and heartbeats

drowns out the whipping

winds of the desert valley

My silver sword rips through

the storm of men and monsters

I chase after the woman of my dreams

through torch-lit castle corridors

in a labyrinth of endless dens and great halls painted red

The trials of the night weigh heavy

as I follow the flowing train of her gown

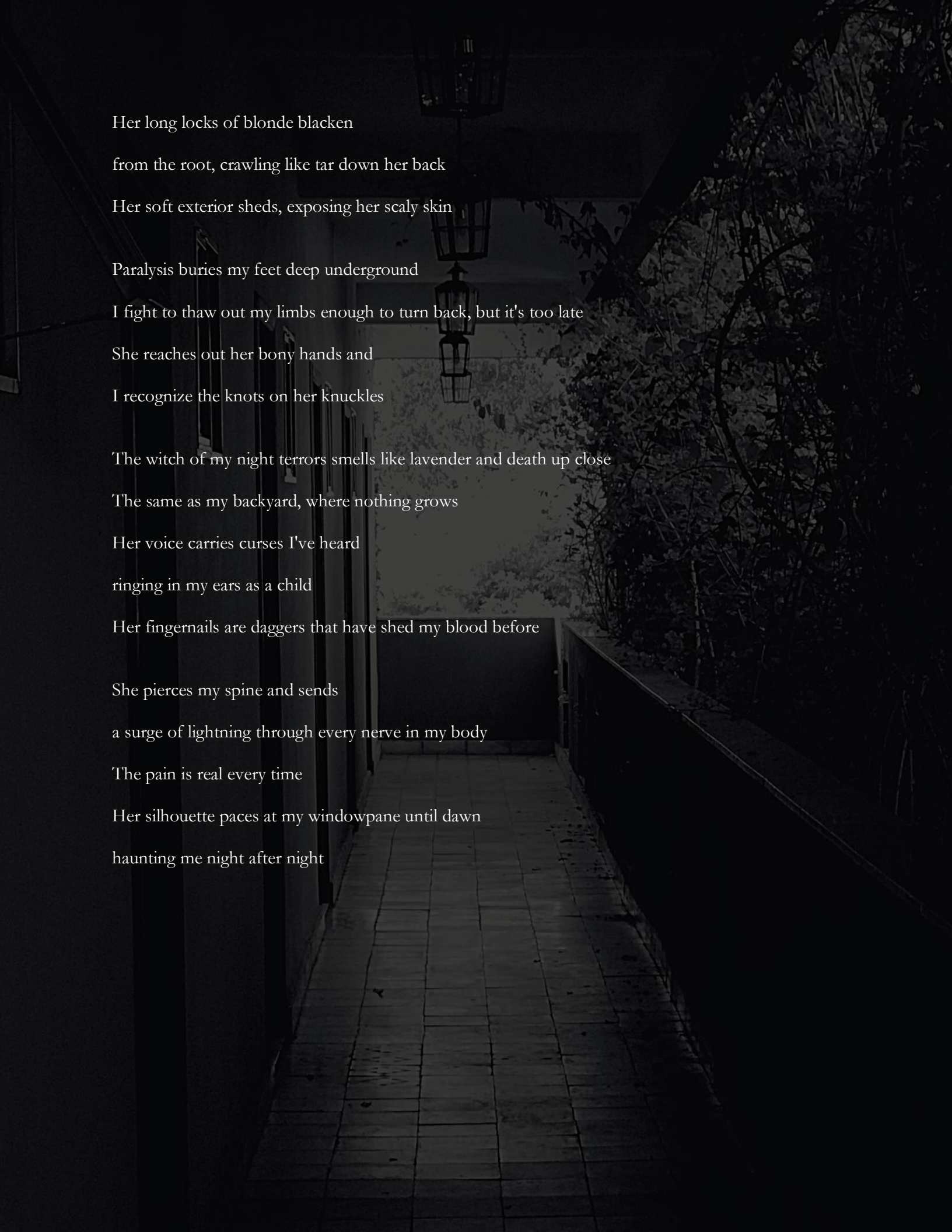
down the limestone stairwell

She fades into the darkness of the cellar

Her footsteps quiet

The woman of my dreams stands under a lancet arch

bathing in a sliver of moonlight



Her long locks of blonde blacken

from the root, crawling like tar down her back

Her soft exterior sheds, exposing her scaly skin

Paralysis buries my feet deep underground

I fight to thaw out my limbs enough to turn back, but it's too late

She reaches out her bony hands and

I recognize the knots on her knuckles

The witch of my night terrors smells like lavender and death up close

The same as my backyard, where nothing grows

Her voice carries curses I've heard

ringing in my ears as a child

Her fingernails are daggers that have shed my blood before

She pierces my spine and sends

a surge of lightning through every nerve in my body

The pain is real every time

Her silhouette paces at my windowpane until dawn

haunting me night after night