Now I remember a gorge in the valley. A stream went singing through its deep bed, completely hidden by the craggy ground covered with brambles. Now I'm like the gorge; I feel this small arroyo sing in my depths and I have given him my flesh for a cover of brambles until he comes up to the light.

DAWN

All night I've suffered, all night my flesh has shuddered to deliver its gift. There's the death sweat on my temples; but this isn't death, it's life!

And now I call You Infinite Sweetness, oh Lord, so that You might free him easily.

Be born now, and let my cry of pain rise at dawn, woven with the singing of the birds!

from *Poems of the Saddest Mother*

CAST OUT

My father said he would throw me out; he shouted at my mother that he would cast me out this very night.

The night is warm; by the clear light of the stars I could walk to the next village; but what if he's born during these hours? Maybe my sobs have called him; maybe he'd want to come out to see my face. And he'd shiver in the raw wind, even though I'd cover him.

WHY DID YOU COME?

Why did you come? No one will love you even though you're beautiful, my child. Even though you smile happily, like the other children, like the youngest of my little brothers, no one will kiss you but me, my child. And even though your small hand might search all over for toys, you won't have anything to play with except my breast and the thread of my tears, my child.

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Why did you come, if the one who brought you to be hated you when he felt you in my womb?

But no! You came for me; for me who was alone, even when he pressed me in his arms, my child!

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: *Poems of the Mothers* and *Poems of the Saddest Mother* first appeared in *Desolación,* Gabriela Mistral's first collection of poetry and prose, published by the Spanish Institute of Columbia University in 1922. In 1950, Editorial del Pacifico in Santiago, Chile, published a limited edition of the prose poems with drawings by the Romanian artist André Racz.

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