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## Alfama

James Powell

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That man whose mind  
Presides on all our memories: his courage flecked on your reluctant  
Bones, his myths and laughter plucking every word I try to live upon:  
He lived, our father, hard in his way, and strong with the strength  
Of all his fathers, and stronger against their legacied strength.  
Weeks past the date he left the lighted place, and became both himself  
And his ashes—not ours any more, or theirs of ancestral morality,  
Or even worried Mother's in all her devotion, but just his best  
Sinew of singular spirit, rare in the black Alone.

At longest last  
He went quietly elsewhere, out of his ruined, our-life-giving body,  
And went not at all to the pastelled rewards of pink, palm and pearl,  
In his kept and diaconal cutaway, but, naked and wrecked, up high,  
Into the cloud of his crowding recognitions, probably laughing.

—Charles Philbrick

## Alfama

By forlorn glimmer, threading secret ways,  
Where Tagus lapped the quays of Black Horse Square;  
In rotting labyrinths from Moorish days,  
Your wraith still waits beside a cobbled stair.

I watched your step upon the gaslit street,  
And drank your tears wrung by the *fado's* song;  
In lanes where echoes, night and shadows meet  
I clutched the hope you lent and proved was wrong

Exultantly I made my madman's boast,  
Nor sensed the mockery of truth. Now sane,  
I plead through tears of vitriol, "Oh ghost,  
Illusion, joy of fools, come back again!"

—James Powell