

the HARLEQUIN

Pippa Little

A Mother Knows

La Santisma isn't soft brown as a blown rose,
all Virgin of Guadalupe: she is white bone.
Skull and skeleton, womanised by tumbling horsehair
she carries a razor-sharp scythe and a full set of teeth
bared in a grin. They dress her in lace and gold silk,
layer after layer, fold upon fold, surround her with lilies
but she is not beautiful, nor does she want to be.
It is not beautiful to be hungry, to sleep on the street,
to rob at gunpoint, to crave the sad dreams of solvents.
She wants you to come to her on your knees, offer
what is most necessary to you – tequila, cigarettes, money,
anything is acceptable but shame. *I will give you a good death*
she whispers through clenched jaws. *Die hard and slow,*
alone, or die with me. A mother knows.

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