

## THE SILVERED SNOUT ©

Asphodel meadows filled with bloom  
With pallid glow light Hades gloom,  
Whilst weaving dark Stygian doom  
The Moirae ply their fateful loom.  
Lachesis ceasing now to spin,  
Atropos cuts life's thread, so thin;  
When Clotho's distaff idle lies,  
A spirit says his last goodbyes.  
Now the ferryman takes his fee,  
A charge this spirit did foresee;  
He took a treat to pay his way  
And keep hell's fiendish dog at bay.  
From out the abyss threefold barks,  
Hell's monstrous warden ever harks  
To oars which splashing, blade by blade,  
Announce the passing of a shade  
Who fearless stands upon the spot  
Which Vergil claims sways mankind's lot.  
The road dividing cleaves the way,  
Two paths diverge like night and day,  
Hastening souls to meet their fate;  
Kerberos guards the destined gate.  
The left speeds sinful souls to doom  
Spent in hell's Tartarean gloom;  
The right leads straight to Pluto's realm  
Decked with Orphean groves of elm,  
In Elysian Fields dressed with gold,  
As by the poets we are told.  
Yet now the Earth begins to shake,  
Mankind with fear begins to quake,  
The voice like thunder now resounds  
Of Pluto pacing royal grounds.  
"Who dares to seek my kingdom's shores?  
To knock upon these hallowed doors?  
Who dares usurp my godhead's name?  
Befits he hang his head in shame.  
Who dares thus mock my state divine  
Merits Tartarus by design."  
Then Pluto, heartless and austere,  
With iron cloak does wipe one tear.  
The rustling Dryads cease to dance,  
The piping fauns no longer prance,  
Though Earth stands trembling all around,  
The shade, still fearless, stands his ground.  
Though aged now with silvered snout,  
On shaky legs he turns about,  
Half blind, half deaf, with rasping breath

He looks into the face of death.  
His subjects bowed beneath his gaze,  
The God, incensed, with eyes ablaze,  
In majesty divine arrayed,  
With chilling voice salutes the shade.  
“Go, begone, thou impudent hound,  
By infernal darkness be bound.  
Your name will never here resound;  
Not one to defend thee can be found.  
But hark! A gentle voice speaks out;  
“Be calm, my lord, there is no doubt,  
This hound who bears thy august name  
Deserves just judgement all the same.  
I beg thee to my words give heed  
For I myself will intercede.”  
For mercy pleads Persephone  
Who Pluto stole from Ceres’ knee.  
“My lord, unto my ears did come  
The news which did a heart benumb;  
I spoke then with a nymph on earth  
Who told me of this shade’s great worth.  
The nymph, though lame and sick in health,  
Would ne’er have swapped for rank or wealth  
Her life’s companion, canine friend,  
Whose death has caused her heart to rend;  
The friend who, faithful, did abide,  
Remaining always by her side;  
He never raced the Anemoi  
Nor played amongst the Hoi Polloi.  
The nymph confessed she named the hound  
And said ‘tis she who ought to pound  
The road which leads to hell and doom;  
She’d gladly swap her life for tomb,  
If Pluto’s Majesty divine  
Be not appeased by gift of wine.”  
Thus graciously does Pluto’s Queen  
With pity seek to intervene.  
Not yet does Pluto’s hardened core  
Beneath such mournful tidings thaw,  
But Father Zeus has heard the tale  
And sends back Hermes to that vale  
Across the Acherusian Lake,  
Which makes the hearts of mortals quake.  
Now Hermes flying, lyre in hand,  
Proclaims aloud through Pluto’s land  
The father of the gods’ decree,  
Answering Proserpina’s plea.  
“By my divine command this hound  
Will be from Hades’ Law unbound;

Forever, fleet of foot, to be  
Renowned for all eternity.  
Where golden flowers bloom all year,  
Celestial rivals all will fear;  
Teumessian Fox may now be caught,  
And Laelaps chase may come to naught;  
If cooling Zephyr sets the pace,  
It's doubtful who will win the race.  
Where Ocean nurtures golden bloom,  
He'll swim beside its sweet perfume  
And drink from crystal fountain springs  
In shady groves as Vergil sings.  
O brother, hear my will divine,  
This hound deserves on earth to shine,  
Thus I would place him as a star  
To twinkle in the sky afar.  
Yet every spoken word I heed  
And more to hear there is no need;  
None ever spoke with truer heart  
Than she who, grieving, takes his part.  
On his behalf, without a care,  
She'd brave the manyheaded lair.  
So now my will I do declare  
Which all will find is very fair.  
The nymph did name the hound for you,  
For honour to your godhead's due;  
This pious nymph I must respect,  
It's wrong such homage to neglect.  
Her hound will take the right-hand path  
And on the way, he'll take a bath.  
By Oceanus he'll be cleansed  
Lest Homer's heroes be incensed;  
Then on to the Elysian Fields  
He'll make his way and you will yield!  
Whene'er you travel on the earth,  
Your pitch-black horses bring no mirth.  
Thus I decree, for evermore,  
This hound shall always take the floor  
Upon thy chariot of night,  
And thus to do shall be his right.  
Your helm of darkness you may keep,  
A god should never have to creep.  
But no more shall you claim the right  
To frighten mankind into flight,  
Whilst staying always out of sight.  
Amongst the children of the light  
This jet-black hound with chest of white  
Shall be to them a clear delight.  
Your namesake will your name restore,

Your fates entwined for evermore;  
He'll dog and circle you so tight  
Like Charon, your space satellite.  
He'll keep henceforth his silvered nose  
To comfort men in their repose;  
So shall mankind no longer fear  
Your gloomy godhead, brother dear.  
They do not wish to see thy face  
Which in your helm you may encase,  
But they will know that you're about  
By the light of his silv'ry snout.

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**RIP**  
**PLUTO**  
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