

## IÑU

“Arma virumque cano.”  
“I sing of arms and the man.”  
The arms were of my making.  
The man? His name was “Iñigo.”  
His Aeneid began as well, in ashes.  
His Troy, the citadel of Pamplona,  
Castle’s crumbling walls,  
Cannons’ round shots  
Shattering legs and dreams,  
Now fodder for failure.  
Once a palette of glory’s hues,  
Now blood ooze on palette  
Of broken bones.  
His spiritual odyssey had begun.  
Ordeals awaited him.  
His demons demanding equal time,  
But God’s glory would win in the end,  
And bring him Aeneas-like to Rome,  
A founder, refined in “fiery” passion.

## IÑAKI

I had always dreamed of being a sculptor. I loved the feel of stone. When my hands felt the rough surfaces of rock and granite, I knew I could use my tools to make the stone as smooth as marble. Since I worked in a stone quarry, I had many opportunities to get to know the stone. It was almost as if I could sense a life within it; a shape or form yearning to be released and come to be something more. But, for now, I was a stone mason and that meant chiseling the stone and forming blocks that would be used for building houses, citadels, and castles. It gave me great pride knowing that my stonemasonry would be used for both simple and grand purposes. But then, everything changed for us at the quarry. As Navarrese, we had bridled at the Spanish control since 1512 when they had conquered our land. Plans were being made in concert with the French to take back Navarre. For us at the quarry, that meant our chisels and tools would only be used to create round shot cannon balls. We would provide the ammunition that would defeat the Spanish invaders. There was something within me that rebelled against this order to use our skills meant for building up to create something that would tear down walls and destroy the enemy. After all, didn’t Our Lord say, “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.”? But I was a simple stonemason following orders.

And so, I set to work cutting the stone, chiseling away, following the specification of the round shot cannonball. The work was monotonous. Each day’s labor was the same. My mind would wander as I worked, though still careful not to let the chisel slip so I would have to begin again. In my daydreams, I would imagine a future filled with fame and glory, not on the battlefield but

as a sculptor. I had heard of Michelangelo, “Il Divino.” and I dreamed of going to Rome and Florence to see his “Pietà” and “David.” Would I ever attain his fame? Would I be remembered as the Navarrese Michelangelo? It was a particular piece of stone that I was working with that woke me from my daydreams of fame and glory. There was something about this stone that captured my attention. Perhaps, it was the marbling, the veins that formed a cross embedded in the stone. I was careful as I chiseled its round shape not to mar this cruciform. When I had finished and held this ball of stone in my hands, I felt as if it were crying out to me. “I am more than stone. I am destined for something greater. I will be the reason for someone to change the course of his life and the lives of countless others. I will be remembered and forgotten.” “So strange,” I thought to myself. “How can this cannonball be anything more than it is?” And yet, something prompted me to chisel the letters, “IÑU” above the cruciform I had seen in this round shot cannonball. It was added to the others and carted away for the upcoming battle.

I remember the day well. It was May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1521. The French troops which had been garrisoned nearby were on the move toward the Citadel of Pamplona where a group of Spanish soldiers were guarding the fort. We knew they were severely outnumbered and had no chance of victory. Many of us who worked at the quarry left our tools and followed the troops from a distance as they made their way to the Citadel. We had hoped to see our handiwork, the round shots fired from cannons to breach the walls. The bombardment lasted six hours until the Spanish garrison surrendered. We saw the French soldiers entering the battered Citadel, its defenses breached. Soon after, a number of these same soldiers were carrying out a man, wounded in the battle. I asked one of the soldiers who he was, and they told me that his name was “Iñigo” from Loyola and they were so moved by his bravery that they were taking him into the city to dress his wounds. It had to have been one of our cannonballs that had shattered his leg.

As the other stonemasons returned to the quarry, I went into the rubble of the citadel, drawn by some strange impulse. I remembered the cannonball with the initials, “IÑU” and the cruciform, and I felt impelled to see if I could find it. Could this have been the cannonball that wounded the man whose name was “Iñigo?” As I carefully made my way into the fortress and marveled at how the once strong edifice could be reduced to rubble by the work of human hands, I saw the one I was looking for. I was not certain that this was the one that had struck the leg of the Basque soldier but something within me told me that it was. I picked it up and brought it to my home as a keepsake, a reminder of this battle and a certain man named “Iñigo.”

It took me nine years to begin to see my dreams becoming a reality. I left Navarre in 1525 to become an apprentice in the atelier of André Pilon. He was one of the most renowned Parisian sculptors and I was privileged to work under his instruction. He encouraged me with words that filled me with pride. “Iñaki, you have great talent! I have taught you all that I know, yet you have so much to learn. Have you thought of going to Rome to apprentice with the great, Michelangelo?” His words astonished me. I had longed to see the works of the great sculptor of Rome and Florence, but to have the opportunity to learn from him? At the very moment I began to plan how I would go to Rome and beg the great artist to let me learn from him.

But those dreams were not meant to become a reality. I never did have the opportunity to study with the famous sculptor, Michelangelo. The path of my life took another direction that I had never dreamed of. The year was 1531, ten years after the battle of Pamplona. I had heard of a certain fellow Navarrese whose name was Francisco Xavier. His family's castle was built with the stone from the quarry near Pamplona where I had worked. He had a reputation around Paris as bright, charming, and ambitious. He was teaching at the College of St Beauvais when our paths finally crossed. I had gone to attend one of his public lectures and introduced myself to him as someone from his homeland. He spoke to me of a man a few years older than both of us. His name was Ignatius and Francisco told me about some "Spiritual Exercises" that he was giving to anyone who desired to come to know God and themselves better. He told me as well, how he had been wounded in the Battle of Pamplona and in his convalescence came to feel a call to conversion that would dramatically change the course of his life. When I asked him to tell me his name again, he said "Ignatius now, Iñigo then."

It was as if I had been struck by one of the cannonballs that we had made in the quarry. Could it possibly be that the man whose leg had been shattered by "my" cannonball was Iñigo, now known as Ignatius? When Francisco asked if I would like to meet his friend and spiritual mentor, I was gripped with fear, shame and guilt. How could I come face to face with a man whose pain was caused by my handiwork? When I explained my reticence to meet him, Francisco just smiled and told me that Ignatius would be so happy to meet me that he might do a Basque dance, even with his limp! When I did finally meet Ignatius and told him how my story and his came together on a day in May ten years earlier, he embraced me and thanked me for being an instrument in God's plan for him. And then, he asked me if I would like to make the "Spiritual Exercises". I did make these "Exercises," and that made all the difference in the world to me. I no longer needed fame and glory for myself. I was content using my gifts sculpting statues and other works for churches in Paris. It was Germain Pilon, the son of André, born the year that I came to his father's atelier who would become famous as a great sculptor of the Renaissance. When Ignatius and his companions left for Rome, with hopes to go the Holy Land, I had a great desire to accompany them. Ignatius urged me to remain in Paris and give glory to God through my work here. I was at first disappointed but trusted that he knew what was best for me. As a parting shot, though, I gifted him with a certain "round shot cannonball" inscribed with the letters, "IÑU."