

ENGLISH



AUNT JENNIFER'S TIGERS

~Summary~

-by Pablo Neruda

Stanza- 1

"Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty."

Explanation: Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance and move across a screen or panel. The poet describes them as bright-coloured like the shining golden-yellow jewel topaz free inhabitants of the green forests, and are not scared of the men standing under the tree. These tigers move about with grace, elegance and confidence. Aunt Jennifer's tigers are not real or living tigers. They are images created by her on tapestry. Aunt Jennifer, who is held captive by the oppressive hand of a patriarchal society, creates in her art an alternate world of freedom. The tigers represent her dreams, her desire to be free from constant fear and oppression that govern her life. These majestic and fearless tigers also present a sharp contrast to Aunt Jennifer herself, who is bound by the constraints of married life.

Stanza- 2

"Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool;
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band;
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand."

Explanation: In the second stanza, Aunt Jennifer appears to be creating beautiful images of the tigers by using wool. But she finds it quite hard to pull even the ivory needle. She is so terrorized and tortured that she is unable to carry the weight of the wool. Her fingers flutter. The uncle's wedding band seems heavy on her hand. It suggests that she feels burdened with her marital responsibilities.

Through this stanza, the poet wants to convey the fact that a woman throughout her lifetime works to glorify the tiger', i.e., her husband, but she feels so much subjugated that the marital bond becomes a burden on her. This is also the reality of Aunt Jennifer's life.

Stanza- 3

"When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid."

Explanation: The final stanza reveals a sad truth. The poet says that even death will not be able to release Aunt Jennifer from the trauma she had to undergo during her lifetime. Her life will be a story of her ordeals and the oppression that she was subjected to. However, the tigers created by her will be eternal. They will always be proud and unafraid." Here we get a glimpse of an oft-quoted conventional theme in poetry that art endures beyond human life.

Perhaps the poet wants to say that the women themselves are creating these tigers. They need to break their shackles and be unafraid like the tigers themselves. One more thing that can be inferred from the poem is that Aunt Jennifer, who for long has borne the miseries she was subjected to, now longs for freedom from dominance and male chauvinism.