

## Fiery Furnaces, The "Seven Silver Curses"

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My little sister had a glass of wine  
No doubt a glass of wine too many  
"I bet he's out right now with his Nazi whore  
That's right, I said it, that's what she is, and when he  
Finally saunters back at three or four,  
Don't let him in, put the chain on the door."  
But of course I'd let him in, the jerk.

Now my silly little sister went to some vlahos coffee-  
grind reader  
Ad had a gypsy glint in her eye when she'd smirk  
"Since that's how you feel, I know what to do  
Make sure she gets fixed before she takes him from  
you."

It's a hot August night  
And my sister and I are creeping down south Halsted  
Towards a storefront past a storefront stoop and a  
moon  
And a star and a placard that says Madame Maria's.

"Tell me your troubles,  
But five dollars first."  
That's what she said  
And of course, I thought the worst

Charlatan, phony  
Fraud gypsy bitch whose Greek was bad and English  
was worse  
I held tight to my purse

My sister did the talking and I looked down  
And tapped my foot and sort of twisted on one heel.

Madame pointed to corner  
And twisted her shawl,  
Uncovered a dusty old crystal ball

I peered in despite myself

Somewhere on some love seat, my husband was there

Paying court to his mistress and stroking her hair  
I saw it for myself  
"I can't believe it!" I cried  
Madame Maria said, "Well, I had a notion  
So before you came in, I prepared half a potion

Now you must do the other half  
I wrote you a list  
You must get seven part-silver curses made special  
Out of bullet bits by some Pollock I know in Evergreen  
Park  
And dip them in the potion  
And drop them in Buckingham Fountain at 3:13 on  
Friday morning  
And then she'll be gone, you'll be rid of her!"

Quick, for the potion, we have to get three dozen  
crabapples  
That fell off a raggedy old tree  
Right in the southwestern corner of Columbus Park!  
Faster, we have to go up to Caputo's Produce  
And Fruit Market on Harlem  
And get the garden snake that lives in the banana bin!  
Hurry, we have to get the mercury  
Out of the old thermometer they have through the  
north-facing doors  
To the left by the shoe-shine boys in the lobby of the  
Monadnock building!  
And don't be late, for you must get the silver  
Out of the teeth of one George Karmalitis  
Who as we speak lies dead under a dirty wool blanket  
In the basement of the morgue of Laretto hospital  
The silver teeth of a man killed by a jealous wife!

I wasn't always an old maid  
I didn't always walk down the street  
And have the children yell at me Spinny Spinny the  
Spinster  
And try to knock the hat off my head  
I had a fiancée, or he led me to believe I'd soon be his  
fiancée  
And I did believe him, as I had every right to  
And I'd put on my best dress and we'd go dance at all  
the dances

And I'd never let the boys from the barracks cut in  
They'd come out of Great Lakes, usually straight off  
the farm anyway  
And I'd never really let any of the country club beaus  
get a chance  
Those cream-colored summer suits were never cut to

my taste anyhow  
And those Hyde Park fraternity fellas were out as a  
matter of course  
I don't enjoy a man in red, so certainly not maroon,  
that's for sure

I only had eyes for my guy, see  
But one night he had said he wouldn't be able to take  
me  
As he hurt his shoulder and had his arm in a sling  
But I went anyway and saw him with another woman  
And she was wearing his ring

The silver still smelled and smelted down  
Quick into the copper or lead or whatever else it was  
And when the metal was still soft and hot  
You'd engrave the curse into it with a stylus from an old  
whale bone  
I thought for a second of what I might write  
Something a little different, but with the correct sort of  
spite  
One of them asked panayia mou  
To make that blonde's hair fall straight out  
The potion was ready back at my apartment  
And my sister and I mumbled  
And crossed ourselves when we dropped the curses in  
And I thought of my husband  
My husband and her  
And I thought of me and him, of what we were  
I thought of our wedding day

And I was happy, very simply happy  
Do you hear it  
A modest young woman's simple contentment  
It's probably a sunny day, and I think it was  
The birds were chirping  
And I felt like I was dancing on air  
But not very far off the ground  
I wonder if I knew even then that things wouldn't always  
be perfect  
That one day he'd seek solace in the arms of another  
woman  
And that to win him back, to win him back, I'd have to  
do this

3:11!, 3:12!, 3:13!  
On a hot August night everyone is asleep  
But the crows were watching, witching and my temple  
was twitching  
Twitch, twitch, twitch, twitch, twitch, twitch, twitch,  
twitch

Fountain, sweet fountain  
Fountain, sweet fountain  
Let your water react and turn the curses to fact and  
come true  
Fountain, sweet fountain  
Fountain, sweet fountain  
Let your water react and turn the curses to fact and  
come true  
And they do

The instant we dropped them in, our hearts started to  
race  
And a wind came up off the lake; make no mistake,  
We felt something released out into the city  
And I swore  
And I swooned  
As I swept back somehow to Austin, I don't remember  
how  
Scared of what I had wrought  
But terrified, I didn't get what I had sought

Oh Jimmy, where you been so long  
Oh Jimmy, where you been so long  
Oh Jimmy, where you been so long

Oh Jimmy, where you been so long  
Oh Jimmy, where you been so long  
Oh Jimmy, where you been so long

And as the clock struck eight the next morning  
My husband was next to me with a smile on his face  
And I looked, no blond hairs on his pajamas  
And it was as if I had been awakened from a bad  
dream

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