

The Fiery Furnaces "Seven Silver Curses"

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Seven Silver Curses

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 fiancee, or he led me to believe I'd soon be his
fiancee
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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