

## Seven Silver Curses

### The Fiery Furnaces

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