
“The Mad Girl (25 poems)”

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THE MAD GIRL

shivers in the corn fields.
A swirl of black birds
swims on the currents
of wind. She wants
them to lift her from
the past months, sweep
her up, like a comet
that takes her from the
dark roses, the velvets
and leather she orders
nights she can't sleep.
She wants to be flung
where no one can
find her, moving like
eels so old they have no
names thru emerald
water. She wants the
loud iced rain to blur
the warning, the blues
howling, some nights,
even louder

LONGS TO SEE THE VERMILLION MOON

a word she used in a freshman
comp class and was told it
didn't exist. She wants that
moon, exotic as the long gone
sailor's eyes, the ripples at
Lake Dunmore glowed in more
years ago than she can believe.
She doesn't want just any
moon but a moon the color
of her cries, garnet and tangerine,
a Harvest Moon that will turn
her bare arms and thighs
rouge as he did. Later, she opens
the blinds. She'd almost
forgotten about the moon but
suddenly something pulls her from
the quilts to the window and
it was there, as if waiting for her
in her dream, a moon
as in love with secrets as she is,
letting mysteries bleed into
the shadows of her bedroom,
into the round blond
vanity and hassock she once
watched her mother stand behind
her braiding her hair, Otter
Falls crashing in the distance into
the whirlpool she isn't sure
came from other worlds
or from her own imagination

IS TIRED OF RUSHING INTO D.C. ON THE METRO

heels in a bag, a cup of Starbucks dripping on her. Sure she wanted a snazzy condo and a six figure pay check and if she wasn't so tired she'd stop and wander thru that National Gallery and The Hirshhorn, have lunch at the Botanical Gardens. Or maybe even meet some dude in a Dupont Circle bar or a Georgetown Cafe. Sometimes her life seems old as water and she dreams of a simple cottage a few blocks from the sea, the light perfect for painting if she wanted to take up water colors again.

THINKS MUCH MORE ABOUT THE PAST THAN THE FUTURE

those gorgeous lovers who
slid thru her arm, now dead. The blues singer,
the all night ex marine with the bluest
eyes that burned thru night radio
who she knocked her knuckles
raw banging the door to get to him
And the man who lip read her heart. Gone.
Not living, gone like her now scarred
skin, her ballet extensions and
balance. Not a dancer but how she
loved the dance flight, tangoing across the
room. She longs for hours at the barre as her legs
became daggers, remembers her own
hair, so thick it had to be thinned out. And
those young cats so wild no one could
catch them. She dwells on the gone
family, uncles who shared stories
of weekends at Schroon Manor and
the Concord and played baseball with her
behind the white gabled house as
the apple tree branches grew
closer to the ground
and they did too

IS CRYING AT THE BALLET BARRE

amazed she can even stand there
after the injury. Her foot, her leg
has its own story. This is not the
first time. After the car split her
forehead one year and she lost
amethyst barrettes, came home
with bandages hiding the long
scar that would shock her once
the steri strips were taken away
but the tears back at the barre
were of joy and relief to be able
to bend and move to the music
that entered her and then the hour
or two break when the whole
world was her mother dying and
only ballet makes her believe she would survive

ON COLUMBUS DAY

remembers a fall day as warm
on the Waltham campus when
he came up to her. She was
wearing a rust colored corduroy
mini she would, a year or so later
wear to her first poetry reading
on the lake blurred by snow.
The drifts all the way from
Colonie, the green glimpse
of water startling. Who'd suppose
"Do we have school on Columbus
Day" would tie lives into a knot
it would take years to know
was a noose. But that golden
afternoon the mad girl said yes,
not to the question of school
but to a Chinese dinner that went
on till they both dropped out
of college, his relatives screaming
the mad girl ruined him, must
be pregnant, wore her hair
like a hippie and that because of
her he'd never amount to much.
She'd drag him down to the
gutter.

TRUDGES THRU MAPLE LEAVES AND DOGWOOD

So like fall at college where
she trudged to the dress maker
to have her skirts taken in. Her
closet bulged with more than
the other students' rooms.
Coming back, the sun crimson
and caramel. For the first weeks
she'd be glad to drop out and
just married. Four more years
seemed like more than she could
bear climbing the dusty stairs
of Hall of Languages where her
English teach said "commingling"
and "vermillion" were not words
and gave her a D. Then her wet
collage in shades of purple was
tracked around white carpet by
the art teacher's dog making
her scream "you'll never be a
painter." A week after she
picked up her tight split seam
skirt she falls in the leaves,
trying to write a paper about
images and colors for her
English assignment after a walk
around campus she
was unsure anything in college
would ever be what she'd
imagined

SOAKS IN OCTOBER

as the gold each afternoon
slams her faster. Everything
slams her faster. Everything
she waits for to bloom, like
calm that escapes her has
already done so. Plums,
dusky rose, walnuts and
hickory. Leaves are a green
tunnel, are now burnt sienna
and russet. The herons have gone.
The tangerine trees stalks
come inside. Light slants
from the pond faster
each day. Apples become
cider as love slips thru fingers.
The moon chases any light
left across the sky

WRAPS IN OCTOBER

clouds hang over the
lake, a charcoal scarf
across the hills. Some
where else a new
baby howls as the
lids are closed on a
mother. Nothing does
not seem fragile to
her this morning, delicate
as glass flowers in a
box flung down the street
in a hurricane. She bolts
the shutters of her
heart, would
fold the dark maps
open before if
she knew how to
close them

SHIVERS,

can't find anything
warm enough to wrap in
this Mid October
afternoon with the rain
a dark shawl across
the horizon. Days like
this she hears a distant
train she once thought
would take her out
of the town she
never felt at home in.
By night the world
begins to fling its
stones. She hears a
stranger call a
child's name and
then silence

LETS THE FALL SUN

wrap her like a scarf. The
ruby berries she moves thru
glisten like jewels. Birds
thick in their branches.
Hemlock like the trees
that cloaked her grand
mother's drive way where
they made clay figures.
The mad girl doesn't
want to think of the dead
who no longer see the
green beads or pine cones
she remember sleeping
in beds of on Girl Scout hikes,
falling asleep to the rustle
of leaves and the perfume
of burning cedar

FEELS OCTOBER'S COLD FINGERS

nothing good has happened
in the past months. Color-
less fields stretch out.
The night birds are migrating.
When she can't sleep she
thinks of when she will
no longer hear them,
almost with relief

WATCHES THE WIDOWS

sitting alone, playing Saduka
or Solitaire or reading the
travel section. Sometimes
she meets other widows.
she could pretend she's
lost her man and maybe
join them. But something
in her wants to keep
her distance the way she
always tries to sit alone
on the metro

VOWS NOT TO SLEEP AGAIN

with a lover who calls
her by another woman's name
even tho he has those blue
frozen lake forget me not
eyes and says without his leg
left in the muddy fields
of Iraq he can get closer to her,
deeper and besides, she
thinks since he gave up so much
for his country, won't he do
the same for her? And she
vows, too, not to shake for men
who rescue and care for
strays, do what you
could imagine to save a sick
cat and she imagines he would
be as gentle and cherish her
as his adored felines and
when he doesn't, she is left
with only the lyrics for a
"why didn't we" blues
that will last longer
than he did

WISHES SHE COULD

“pack up her troubles in an old
kit bag and smile, smile smile.
Only she doesn't even know what
a “kit” bag is or how those words
fill this gray Thursday morning
when actually the sun is wild thru
the maples, the last warm days
before temperatures plummet
and not even the sun walking
thru dried oak to birch that
crunch as she remembers
rolling in piles at 11 before any
of the darkness she can ever get
her hands around keeps her
from floating and even more when
she reads the man who wrote those
lyrics shot himself in 1942

WONDERS IF SHE'LL EVER FEEL

swept away again, feel love or
lust like a tornado? She tries
to imagine rushing out in a blue
denim mini to knock on some
door until her knuckles bled. Or
driving to his all night to dawn
show, frantic, weeping how
she didn't want anything from
him, only to keep him in her life.
She uses her poems as a lure,
leaves a note with so much
left out he could imagine anything
he wanted, as now, years later,
she scribbles notes in this
spiral wire notebook to
finish what she never could then

LONGS FOR THE BLUE FJORDS OF THAT SUMMER

when all that mattered
still seemed ahead. It
was before the names
she scrawled on a poem
that had nothing to do
with them, lovers now
mostly dead. Their faces
thru a hazy gauze still
blossoming in her mind
like artichoke flowers
on distant mountains

WATCHES THE LIGHT DISAPPEAR FASTER

Consuming Desire. Something
that will keep her starved
and longing, a luscious chocolate
and caramel cake she can't keep her
hands from. Or a man, preferably
one she can't quite keep but will die
trying, takes little gulps of, an
agony to ecstasy roller coaster, her
hair flying, her skin a blush of rouge. The
beauty of hard muscle in an Argentine
tango hold whispering *hold me baby,*
pressing into her so deep she can
do nothing but follow

FEELS NOVEMBER MOVING DEEP

into her fingers. Past falls, like a
cuddle in rumba, press her into
warm arms that stay only in
dreams, wouldn't always
be there to hold her. She strings
amulets of love and dark purple tear
shaped tattoos of grieving.
If only she could be Rapunzel,
braiding long blond hair
into a lasso, rope not to lower
to any lover but to shimmy down in
to brightness, into a cove of
light where she will be
stunned by the sudden beauty
she has longed for
more outlined and fierce
outlined by the darkening blue horizon

DREAMS OF THOSE DAWNS IN MOROCCO

birds and roosters
days after the storm
of rice and flowers.
Roosters and dogs,
a bracelet of amber
thighs. Hers circled
your body like an
anklet of silver as
the light held them
like a cobweb and
the air doesn't move

FEELS SHE IS LOSING

all the things that mattered so,
that flat taut belly, legs she couldn't
walk down Main Street without
a blare of whistles, Now she can
wear size 0 or 00 and not worry
about gaining a pound, something
she wouldn't mind doing. She
longs for her old voice, whispery
as Marilyn Monroe, seductive as a
hot weather girl, something she
did on the all night radio show.
She's lost her family, hair so thick
it had to be thinned, lost cats
and lovers. Lost menⁱ she was sure
she couldn't live without. Lost
publishers, the smoothest skin, desire,
perfect turn out, balance and still
shakes at how much more she
has to lose

REMEMBERS MORE KISSES

past that first one near the rail road tracks
and the Episcopal Church when Doug
smelling of Clearasil swooped down,
past the barberry. Afterward she said
“we cant do this too often.” She must
have kissed the man on her mother’s
blue couch when that man pulled her
hand down to his crotch, said *now*
you’ve done this you have to do
something. There was the kiss under
the chuppah remembered only in photo
graphs but were there kisses of the
ones she remembers most, the man
who held her in his brother back seat
Chevy, Al Martino’s *Oh My Love* playing
as he cupped her breast under the
pink checked cotton. There must
have been kisses from the man on
all night radio, before she kissed him
where he moaned and moaned. Tho she
remembers she wore with each man,
the first and the last time, the kisses blur.
Yes some where there were esp good lovers
but what of the kisses? What of the ones
as hands slipped inside clothes in the
back of the cab rushing to the airport
or just before going under the knife

WANTS TO LIE IN THE DARK

listening to the oak leaves,
to small animals, a rabbit
maybe or fox running thru
the mounds of them. By
morning the hurricane
could make its own music.
For now, she leans against
the stained glass, twists
the grainy amber. The same
two horses come to the pond
pulling the last of the wild
flowers by their roots, grazing
so close to each other,
this last light can't move
between their bodies. Nutley
Pond slides of the falls. From,
two rooms away, she can hear
the cat softly sleeping

DREAMS SHE WAKES UP IN A BURKA

already shivering, her heart
pounding, sweaty. This new world
is a world of forced marriages,
young widowhood, imprisonment,
abduction and fear. She jolts
up, tries to turn on the light,
takes a valium to calm down. When she
reaches for the switch she pulls the
lamp to the floor, cringes sure the
dream is real. Too paralyzed to move
she is sure if she opened the blinds she'd
see a desert road with blackly camouflaged
women under a blazing sun. She is
terrified if she goes outside
she will be abducted and forced to
marry a foreign fighter. Her internet is
down but she doesn't care. She
would see people in the outside world
and it would only make her sad.
Seeing the outside world would be just
another sorrow. She never befriended the
women in the caliphate. Life was
filled with love, children and
the joys of domestic life even tho one
propaganda film showed a Jihadist from the
Netherland showing off on Twitter
an Oreo cheesecake she had made. No,
the mad girl knows she will quickly find themselves
part of an institutionalized near assembly
to provide fighters with wives, sex
and children. And when the
husbands are killed they are expected
to celebrate their martyrdom .
She can't believe this is real but can't
shake off the horror. All she can
think of is beheading, of being kidnapped, of
losing her daughter. She's heard of
women put in prison, told to marry a
foreign fighter or have their
heads hang in the square. The mad
girl shudders to know young
girls can be married at age 9, made
into sex slaves and goes into the next bedroom
to hug her daughter, brings her
back to her own bed for the rest of the night

DREAMS SHE COULD BE FALLING RECKLESSLY IN LOVE AGAIN

could fall for men who never
were available but made the
most scrumptious subjects
for poems, the agony to
ecstasy rollercoaster. Her
bikini slim thighs and hair
too thick to clasp in
combs, like her longing. Past
days she'd knock on a door
until her knuckles turned bloody
and the phone's stillness
knifed. Now she wants to feel
what she hasn't even if it
turns her heart to shreds
