

Lady Lazarus Sylvia Plath

- I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it——
- 5 A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot
- A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.
- 10 Peel off the napkin
O my enemy.
Do I terrify?——
- The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
15 Will vanish in a day.
- Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me
- And I a smiling woman.
20 I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.
- This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.
- 25 What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd
Shoves in to see
- Them unwrap me hand and foot——
The big strip tease.
30 Gentlemen, ladies
- These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,
- 35 Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.
- The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut
- 40 As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.
- Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
45 I do it exceptionally well.
- I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.
- 50 It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical
- Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
Amused shout:
- 55 'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge
- 60 For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge
For the hearing of my heart——
It really goes.
- And there is a charge, a very large charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood
- 65 Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.
- I am your opus,
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby
- 70 That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.
- Ash, ash—
You poke and stir.
75 Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——
- A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.
- 80 Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.
- Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.