

Lady Lazarus

Sylvia Plath

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it—

A sort of walking miracle, my skin

5 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.

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.

What a million filaments.

The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot

The big strip tease.

Gentlemen, ladies

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These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.

35 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.

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:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge

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

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.

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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.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

80 Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.