

**JOUMANA
HADDAD**

**FIVE
POEMS**

Translated by
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BAD HABITS

She said love is like gambling
and she always loses.
She said it's a bad habit
that she does not dare give up.

She said she's afraid of light
even though the light she's spent was
not little
She's content with her solitude
and she does not care for
companionship.
Still she falls from her cloud
whenever rain guides her to her land.

She said she's robust but futile
and gentle despite herself.
Still she feigns roughness
because affection like love

is a bad habit
and so is silence
which she'll never quit.

She said she's bored
not even good enough for sleep
but she sleeps to remain like a fetus
drowned in the waters of oblivion.

She says she's a tired woman
bleeding from her wound
wishing to never heal.

She said she's loser by nature,
a loser so that she'll deserve her
victory.

She said at last that life is a bad habit
which she hopes to maintain
with a little bit of will power
and a great deal of forgetfulness.

WHO IS STEALING MY FOREST?

I light my green leaves
and warm myself.
I exhale
and slip
with the ecstasy of one falling into the enemy's embrace
with the delight of one accepts his torturer's judgment
or with the ravenousness of one who shares the murder his guilt

I flee
from innocent weakness to absolute frailty
from sex to a pleasure that sex cannot kill off
from my own wisdom
to the ice of escape.
I find shelter in the land of a brazen angel,
in brimstone growing within its own secrets,
from my intelligent misery
to a storm of cruelty purified of hope
like the like return of the prodigal daughter to her last escapade
to the wedding that follows the sun
where I will neither live nor vanish.

And my spirit calls me toward a reasonable, foolish kind of madness
that has ebbed and flowed through my life
So I began to sway from rebellion to infatuation
and from ecstasy to dispersion
completely unaware

Here I am returning
Here I am returning to love
like the return of the she-lion to her husband the lion
So who will steal the forest from me now?

IDENTITY

This is how I am,
no time for guilt,
playing with fate and quick to bore.
Promises that implode betrayed with neglect.

It's useless to change me.
Certainty is a stranger to me
because of the panic love causes,

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because of imagination,
because I'm only
fit
for laziness.

My time is arranged in the last minute
or in premature withdrawals,
in a sun that does not suffice
and in night that never ends,
in impetuous leaps between thirst and its slaking.

This how I am—
silence to reassemble my parts,
a slow terror to shatter me,
silence and terror to heal me from a wicked memory
No hope that light will guide me.
I own nothing except my errors.

DEVIL

When I sit before you, stranger,
I know how much time you'll need
to bury the distance between us.
You are exceedingly intelligent
and I am in the midst of my feasting.
You are deliberating how to flirt
and I, under my curtain of modesty,
am already done devouring you.

NO

I see you in broad daylight, an impossible moon,
and in my night a sun, unreachable.
So I refuse to love you.

In my mirror I see you, the silhouette of a tattered sadness
that my eyes hold captive.
And on my scattered papers I see you,
the traces of tears I have yet to shed.
And I refuse to love you.

I see you as a prohibited dream,

that combs my innocent hair into sinful braids,
and when I awaken,
your luminous kisses drip
on my pillow
one star after another
to put out my shyness.
And I refuse to love you.

Because I love you
I refuse to love you.

Because my thirst for you is fire
and because my heart does not deserve
the fate of a crazed moth.

Because I love, my sir,
and because you love me,
let your pride refuse my ashes.

Translated from the author's collections *D'awa ila 'Ashaa Sirri*, Beirut 1998, and
Yadaan ila Hawiyah, Beirut, 2000, both published by Dar an-Nahar.