

**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.