

Shari Diane Willadson

GHAZALS FOR THE CITY

Ghazal-Too Tall

Too tall for rapists; short buggers all, got my quarters anyway.
Interested eyes beware or at least think before a broken nose.

Got a jig going here, that streetlight power-jig, a fancy-dance
across a bridge too tall for my sword-sized shadow.

I'll take a size six, the best women live too tall, too high
on the buggery scale that hangs obvious in the fish market.

Yellow hands wave from violated parking meters. One to
a corner. That's a too tall John; imagine the dick.

You can time the looks, three back in two minutes mean worry.
Four in one is fear and those are never too tall.

Ghazal- Get Them

Get them out, these hump-riding street-crawlers;
get them out, like a lung-full of cheap smoke.

A ten-dollar bill on a string, a high-rise stop sign.
Get them out of the gutter, but watch for holes.

Take a twist on that dirty tongue, spit on the street.
Get them the goods little boy, sidestep the cardboard.

Watch the windows, silver-backed brushes with long strokes.
Get them to promise, just promise, just one more promise.

Even the dogs hump in this part of town, that wet-fur smell.
Get them their muscles and crawl, crawl, crawl, crawl.

Ghazal- On Concrete

Left in a weary weep of black paint on concrete,
Mister Big-name blistered. Missed in the subways.

Coughing in the john, pumping sweet-fat Rikki
on concrete while no one stares or cares.

With the risk-rules riding the sides of buses,
heads and shoes wear on concrete to a wet smudge.

Color-chalked peacocks on concrete, the rain
the stain that fools old men in from the cold.

On concrete, piss steams in an early-morning river,
nearer to the whistle, nearer still the train.

TASTE

Social call: passing cigarettes till we taste filter, passing
threats on pink paper to Nametag Nancy at the nurses station.
She glares, we giggle, flies in her ice cube in a glass half full.

In our rooms, the doctors spit notes on our charts, just
like we spit pills out the window, watch them bounce,
antidepressants for the so-depressed azaleas.

Hospitals finally discovered iron; all the gowns have snaps.
No yells from down the hallway that whisper "You're next."
Clean is annoying; she eats a pinch of dirt from a potted plant.

Randy pads by in thick slippers, asks if the forsythia
has bloomed yet. We pat our pockets, give him handfuls
for cups of bitter tea later in the blue-walled room.

We know sight is like taste; too much Rousseau makes for lions
in ties and lab coats, too much honey ruins the dill pickles
for lunch. Sweet to the tongue tip, both sides to sour.

Too little ground to bury what needs it, toes poke through,
wiggling a dare to come closer. We sit on a stone bench,
savor a taste we can't hide behind any of the curtains.