



IN HANNAH'S COURTYARD

She's Jewish in Amsterdam,
but she's Dutch in Jerusalem.
Hannah lives and creates
in a stone house tucked behind the shuk
where vegetables gambol
and pita bread gavottes.
An artist studio is Hannah's domicile.
Under meringue clouds
her courtyard shimmers
silvery dew and citron sheen.
A mezzo-soprano recording
threads through the blue windows;
chamber music softly brushes
the steps and the cool passageway.

Artists raise their palettes and paint the sun.

In November the brocade sky unravels;
winter rains arrive in caravans
and the four winds drag the chalky sun
and toss it behind the wasteland clouds.
Drab, clammy months
soak the drop-cloth earth
and kerosene heaters spit rings of blue.

The birds flee to Engedi; the artists vanish.

Winter is a bandit who ransacks the city
under the cover of a gun colored sky.
All that glistened now is dull;
The light in Hannah's courtyard etiolates.

Cold houses—like shabby copy books—
lean against bald trees.
The beggar wind of Lubin
pounds on the windows;
ten ghosts pray Kaddish.

Life has left, but life will return.

From a shuttered window a cello resounds.
In the starkness of the day a violin is heard,
and then an aria drifts through the market
like a dream.
Then a sad voice wanders
down the alleyway
where young soldiers used to roam,
speaking of love and war.

At a whizzhumming treadle Singer
Hannah pieces cloth remnants
into a wheat field of soft velvet.
The sun returns wearing clouds
like rosette earrings.
Flowers explode in the Galilee.
Grape vines bud in the Carmel.
The poets scatter seeds on parchment hills,
and the artists paint streams in the deserts.

Doves nest in bougainvillea.
Hannah's courtyard is a permanent address
for feathered colors and exiled shadows,
for those free to paint and play
with the light of the universe,
and then fly away.

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