

# Maram al-Massri

## *Selected Poems*

[77]

2

How foolish:  
Whenever my heart  
hears a knocking,  
it opens its doors.

14

Women like me  
do not know how to speak;  
a word remains in their throats  
like a thorn  
they choose to swallow.  
Women like me  
know nothing except weeping,  
impossible weeping  
suddenly  
pouring  
like a severed artery.  
Women like me  
receive blows  
and do not dare return them.  
They shake with anger;  
they subdue it.  
Like a lion in a cage  
women like me  
dream ...  
of freedom ...

20

[78] I killed my father  
that night  
or the other day –  
I don't remember.  
I go escaping with a suitcase  
filled with dreams  
and amnesia,  
and a picture of me  
with him  
when I was young  
and when he carried me  
on his forearm.

I buried my father  
in a beautiful shell  
in a deep ocean,  
but he found me  
hiding under the bed  
shaking with fear  
and loneliness

30

Help me  
my kind husband  
close this porthole  
that has opened  
on the highest wall  
of my chest.

Stop me  
my wise husband  
from climbing  
the high-heels  
of my femininity,  
for there



at the crossroads  
a young man  
awaits me.

39

[79]

From time to time  
he opened the windows,  
and every now and then  
he closed them.  
His silhouette  
betrayed him  
behind his curtains  
as he came and went,  
his movements  
far and near.  
He turned up the radio  
to fill his solitude  
with music  
deceiving the neighbors  
that all was well.  
We used to see him  
passing by quickly,  
his head downcast,  
carrying his bread  
and returning  
to where  
no one waited for him.

40

He wanted  
no more than this:  
a house, children  
and a wife  
who loves him.

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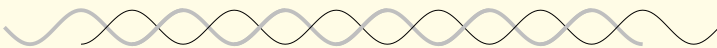
But he woke up one day  
and found that his spirit  
had grown old.

[80]

She wants  
not more than this:  
a house and children  
and a husband who loves her.  
She woke up  
one day  
and found  
that her spirit  
had opened a window  
and fled.

52

He came to me  
disguised in the body of a man  
and I paid him no attention.  
He told me  
'Open!  
I am the Holy Ghost.'  
I feared disobeying him  
and I let him kiss me.  
He uncovered  
my shy breasts  
with his gaze  
and turned me into  
a beautiful woman.  
Then he blew his spirit  
into my body,  
rumbling  
thunder and lightning.  
And I believed.



57

You should not  
have touched my hand  
and left it dreaming  
of your touch.

[81]

You should not  
have kissed my lips  
and left them burning  
for your crush.

You should have  
remained quiet  
so that I would not stop  
hoping.

69

The new dresses  
I bought  
did not help,  
nor the warm  
looks  
I tossed at him.  
My loving words did not help  
nor Ovid's counsel.  
Not even my long black hair,  
or my soft glowing skin.  
My lust did not help  
nor my sweetness  
or my smiles and tears  
to soften  
the hard heart  
of love.

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103

Like grains of salt  
they shone  
then melted.

[82]

This is how they disappeared  
those men  
who did not love me.

104

I am out  
in the cold  
and in the dark.  
Why don't you  
open  
the door  
of your shirt  
to me.

*Translated by Khaled Mattawa*

