

CLAUSTROPHIA

I gotta get outta here –
It could be a hospital
Or a meeting room,
Or my own mind's
Imagination
Driving me
Through so many
Scenarios
Like an unholy
Movie train,
Pictures in all the windows.
I can't fucking believe it.
She loves me she loves me not.
Oh, no, I did it again.
Why did I say that stupid --
Endlessly
Ranting and raving
One thing or another,
One Center at a time –
As the Sages say,
Plus all the complications,
The many "I's" etcetera
Going and coming every which way
It's so fucking true,
The misunderstandings and
Made-up stories and excuses
And modifications of the truth.
To save what? To calm what
Suffering? I remember Anna T.
The Italian translator much
Younger than I
A beautiful kid my size
– looked up to me –
I realized the situation
Finally at the awkward date,
Wherever the fuck that was,
The dumb rendezvous,
And head down walked away fast,
My whole body trembling like
A wounded animal.

Her eyes were on me like God's
In the burning bush:
Fuckhead. Who do you think you are?

Phone calls when I'm out of line,
I hang up before anyone can answer.
Especially a beautiful woman
Who will definitely deny me.
In a gentle way. The way you would
With someone lower than you -- nice,
Not too condescending.
Out of line. For no fucking reason.
All those fucking shopkeepers
Sneering at me or pitying me
Or giving me a break.
I played ball like a maniac.
That's how I got even with myself
For feeling like a lower class dick.

I can't stand it
when the maid hangs around too long.
Get the fuck out already.
And then I feel guilty about it.
I fall in love in 2 or 3 minutes.
All it takes is to feel
Her interest.
That has to come first.
Then I'm ready to make a move.
And then go over and over it again
On the movie head-train,
Replaying
Until I get it right,
Which it never is,
Quite.

I get nervous on busses and planes,
Small compartments,
In audiences,
At meetings,
Bullfights,
Ballgames,
A stranger at the door.
Hospitals.
On the mountain in
Chiapas
Kicking in Chiapas,
Trapped in my body
All kinds of torment,
And then a blank –

Bellevue. New York.
No idea
How I got there,
They put me on methadone
The most creepy drug
Ever invented by Man.
The Junkie nightmare.

Why? I think I know.
Fifty years off and on of psychotherapy,
He knows me, he knows me not.
Self-calming,
Quieting
The Anxiety,
The inferiority,
The *terror* of
The Human situation.

My mother's footsteps
Coming toward my room
Terrifying
In the Brooklyn slum.
I was trembling in my crib.
Light came in like paint.
The ceiling, the door, the Woman.
No escape.
I'm afraid of too many people
Staying in a room
Too long
Or I'm out of there.
I don't like crowds or elevators.
I won't like my grave.
Death is looming.
I sit on my bench
Looking at the blue pool
Longingly but still.
Palmeria
And pomegranates.
Bamboo and oranges.
My determination is strong
And so is my heart
But there are so many things
Wrong with me --
The Fool,
The Harlequin.
I grin and bear it.

I actually grin and
Talk to myself.
Bearing it,
Like a *Mensch*,
Like an Old Man
Yearning for his Lover.
Come on over,
He says to himself,
Come on over.

Murray Mednick
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