**‘Mrs Midas’**

Domestic scene-removed from grand ideas of Greek mythology-contemporised

Typical housewife type scene-creates submissive role for Mrs Midas

Golden, autumnal month

Subverts expectations-Midas always a king, wife never mentioned

Dramatic monologue (similar to ‘Havisham’ in form)

It was late September. I’d just poured a glass of wine, begun

Relaxed environment

to unwind, while the vegetables cooked. The kitchen

Personification-calm, harmonious environment

filled with the smell of itself, relaxed, its steamy breath

Peaceful, content

gently blanching the windows. So I opened one,

Simile-gentle movement-house becomes extension of self-caring for it, preening it

then with my fingers wiped the other’s glass like a brow.

He was standing under the pear tree snapping a twig.

Breaks calm environment, contrasts with relaxed nature of Mrs Midas

Depersonalised-no name

Personification-ominous environment-light drained, replaced with mystery

Now the garden was long and the visibility poor, the way

the dark of the ground seems to drink the light of the sky,

Contrast, indication of Midas touch

but that twig in his hand was gold. And then he plucked

Sugary sweet pear grown in Sept

Alliteration-harsh sound

Take forcefully

a pear from a branch. – we grew Fondante d’Automne –

Simile-shape and brightness of pear/’lightbulb moment’-realisation/innovation

and it sat in his palm, like a lightbulb. On.

S.S-realisation

I thought to myself, Is he putting fairy lights in the tree?

Humorous image, detracts from excitement of moment-understatement

Indicates rational nature of speaker

He came into the house. The doorknobs gleamed.

Historical ref-meeting place between Kings of England and France in 1520 (France)-two kinds tried to outdo each other in displays of wealth

Secrecy, intimacy

Conversational tone

Bright, shining

He drew the blinds. You know the mind; I thought of

the Field of the Cloth of Gold and of Miss Macready.

Simile-linking idea to original King Midas-grandeur

History teacher-brings grandness back to reality

He sat in that chair like a king on a burnished throne.

Negative description of husband

Shining, sparkling

The look on his face was strange, wild, vain. I said,

What in the name of God is going on? He started to laugh.

Inappropriate response to wife’s fear

Negative tone-confusion/shock; worried

Symbolic-gold colour, prosperity

Attempt at normality

I served up the meal. For starters, corn on the cob.

Corn turns to gold, no longer able to enjoy simple pleasure of food-ambition will cause him to starve

Within seconds he was spitting out the teeth of the rich.

Child-like

He toyed with his spoon, then mine, then with the knives, the forks.

fearful

He asked where was the wine. I poured with a shaking hand,

Poisoned chalice-when a reward brings with it a hidden price

Suggests already high quality

a fragrant, bone-dry white from Italy, then watched

as he picked up the glass, goblet, golden chalice, drank.

Alliteration/rule of three-captures transformation of glass-heavy ‘g’ sound indicates shock during transformation

It was then that I started to scream. He sank to his knees.

Humorous image-becomes child-like, scolded for his ambitious actions

powerless

horror

After we’d both calmed down, I finished the wine

on my own, hearing him out. I made him sit

on the other side of the room and keep his hands to himself.

Protective-realisation of danger

I locked the cat in the cellar. I moved the phone.

Despair, shock, disapproval

The toilet I didn’t mind. I couldn’t believe my ears:

Humour-reference to ‘throne’

Pun, wishes granted/ granted (understandably)

conversational

how he’d had a wish. Look, we all have wishes; granted.

Rhetorical Qs convey disapproval

But who has wishes granted? Him. Do you know about gold?

Blunt, suggests disgust, bitterness, judgement

Latin for gold

Physical-ref back to corn, spiritual=no reward

It feeds no one; aurum, soft, untarnishable; slakes

Ref back to wine, but also thirst=desire

no thirst. He tried to light a cigarette; I gazed, entranced,

Humour, contrasts with serious musings about gold’s inability to satisfy desires

Orange/yellow

as the blue flame played on its luteous stem. At least,

I said, you’ll be able to give up smoking for good.

Blunt statement-divide in relationship

fear

Separate beds. in fact, I put a chair against my door,

near petrified. He was below, turning the spare room

into the tomb of Tutankhamun. You see, we were passionate then,

Metaphor-honey is sweet but sticks, hard to remove

Glory days

Darker imagery-tomb=end of relationship

Rhyme creates contrast-normality with grandeur

in those halcyon days; unwrapping each other, rapidly,

Simile-lust, immediacy, treat

like presents, fast food. But now I feared his honeyed embrace,

Preserved in gold, silenced

the kiss that would turn my lips to a work of art.

Usually a positive image, now negative-literal, but also how can she continue to be kind towards her husband after foolishness has torn them apart?

And who, when it comes to the crunch, can live

with a heart of gold? That night, I dreamt I bore

metal

his child, its perfect ore limbs, its little tongue

Poignant image-revealing of sarcastic character-sadness at not having a child-hers is the true price paid for Midas’ greed

Mechanical, dehumanised

like a precious latch, its amber eyes

lifeless

Bizarre, animal like

holding their pupils like flies. My dream milk

toxic

burned in my breasts. I woke to the streaming sun.

Not exotic, removed from society, isolated

Further distance created

Gold dominates each moment

So he had to move out. We’d a caravan

in the wilds, in a glade of its own. I drove him up

Blunt statement-distanced, embarrassment; relegated to child’s position

Shame, secrecy

under the cover of dark. He sat in the back.

And then I came home, the woman who married the fool

Use of third person narration-depersonalised, turns herself into character to be mocked

who wished for gold. At first, I visited, odd times,

Shame and secrecy

parking the car a good way off, then walking.

Fishing=solitary pursuit, cannot even enjoy this

Contrasts with distance of previous stanza openings-closer to death, destruction

You knew you were getting close. Golden trout

Images/trophies preserving memory of him

on the grass. One day, a hare hung from a larch,

A lemon=a dud

a beautiful lemon mistake. And then his footprints,

Greek god of shepherds and flocks-drawing Midas to him-gifted with gold but loses his mind

Situation worsening

glistening next to the river’s path. He was thin,

Pathetic image

delirious; hearing, he said, the music of Pan

from the woods. Listen. That was the last straw.

Reflecting on experience

Mrs Midas=rational woman, cannot cope with delirium of husband

Classic Midas story teaches about the perils of these qualities

What gets me now is not the idiocy or greed

Bitter, but also quite self-involved-hypocritical? Husband is wasting away

but lack of thought for me. Pure selfishness. I sold

Resigned to fate

the contents of the house and came down here.

Fondness, ‘golden hour’

Reflecting, hints at loss-wistful, regretful

I think of him in certain lights, dawn, late afternoon,

and once a bowl of apples stopped me dead. I miss most,

even now, his hands, his warm hands on my skin, his touch.

Hands=once a symbol of intimacy, warmth, closeness; now cold, tainted by Midas touch-sad final image