

Written from the viewpoint of the wife of King Midas. He was granted a wish by Dionysus whereby everything he touched turned to gold.

Peak of Autumn
- golden month.

Form - dramatic monologue - 11 stanzas of irregular line length to reflect their unpredictable lives.

Mrs Midas

Creates relaxed domestic scene to start.

Personification of kitchen to create a sense of being alive and homely. Contrast to the life-sapping events taking place in the garden.

Simile - contrast to lifelessness outside. The beginning of the separation between them.

It was late September. I'd just poured a glass of wine, begun to unwind, while the vegetables cooked. The kitchen filled with the smell of itself, relaxed, its steamy breath gently blanching the windows. So I opened one, then with my fingers wiped the other's glass like a brow. He was standing under the pear tree snapping a twig.

First time we see Mr Midas he is being destructive.

Unsure of what she's seeing and puts it down to visibility - she doesn't understand the situation.

Now the garden was long and the visibility poor, the way the dark of the ground seems to drink the light of the sky, but that twig in his hand was gold. And then he plucked a pear from a branch - we grew Fondante d'Automne - and it sat in his palm like a light bulb. On.

Personification - shows the dark nature of the garden and suggests something is going wrong.

Casual action by Mr Midas - doesn't think anything will happen.

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

Parenthesis adds extra information about their normal life together and the idea that they grew/created something - contrast to later.

Simile - shape and brightness of the pear. Full stops add comedic effect - reflects her shock and disbelief.

He came into the house. The doorknobs gleamed.

Whimsical and humorous imagery contrasts with seriousness of what's just happened.

Two short sentences show how quickly he changed things.

He drew the blinds. You know the mind; I thought of the Field of the Cloth of Gold and of Miss Macready.

A meeting in Calais between Kings of England and France - both built lavish palaces embellished with golden cloth.

Simile - has the power of a king but can't control it. "Burnished" - polished.

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

The look on his face was strange, wild, vain. I said, What in the name of God is going on? He started to laugh.

He realises the power he's been given and doesn't know how to cope.

Question shows Mrs Midas can't understand and they find it humorous - contrast to later.

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

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

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

Tries to inject a sense of normality by using a matter of fact tone.

List shows how many things he was turning - even simple act of dining became difficult.

He asked where was the wine. I poured with shaking hand, a fragrant, bone-dry white from Italy, then watched as he picked up the glass, goblet, golden chalice, drank.

Metaphor - the corn has turned to gold - adds to comical tone.

Tone has become negative.

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

Word choice - connotations of fear, uncertainty - starting to become anxious - not so funny anymore.

Alliteration/list - to show quick progression of the object transforming - harsh sound of "g" highlights seriousness of "gift".

After we had 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.

Emphasises the clear change in relationship and start of separation - loss of touch/intimacy.

Short sentences show the extent to which she had to change things - joke about toilet to soften tone.

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

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

Pause to reflect her shock.

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

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

Short sentence to show how bitter she is about it.

Pun - everyone makes wishes but her "fool" of a husband had to be the one who had his wish granted.

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

no thirst. He tried to light a cigarette; I gazed, entranced, as the blue flame played on its luteous stem. At least,

She mocks him as she is annoyed by his foolish choices - they gain nothing from this "gift".

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

Injects some humour into the shocking situation.

Word choice - connotations of gold.

Enjambment allows pause to reflect on what's happening.

Stanza 7 begins to show the damage done to their relationship. Short sentence to show abrupt change/separation.

Mrs Midas is now afraid of her husband - tone has become more serious.

Word choice - connotations of turning to stone - like he is doing - she worries if it will happen to her.

Associated with the dead - their relationship is dead.

Simile - compares undressing each other to opening a gift or something that is anticipated greatly. - contrast to their new relationship.

Usually has a positive meaning - associated with kindness/empathy - physically impossible to live with a gold heart.

Image turns disturbing as we picture the dead eyes of the child - simile.

Short sentence - blunt dismissal of her husband.

Creates suspense and suggests something is to be feared.

He's in a sorrowful state and is beginning to lose his mind. Pan is God of shepherds and flocks, was isolated from other gods. He's part of the wilderness now.

Duffy encourages us to consider the effect of Midas's story on his wife. Not only hurting him. Explores the selfish nature of relationships.

She uses a list to show Mrs Midas remembering their once full relationship and mourns the loss of the physical part. Repetition of "hands" emphasises that his touch and their intimacy is now lost to her - unlike human contact, gold is cold and hard.

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, in those halcyon days; unwrapping each other, rapidly, like presents, fast food. But now I feared his honeyed embrace, the kiss that would turn my lips to a work of art.

Reference to gold.

A time that was idyllically happy and peaceful.

Art is something to be admired yet never changed or touched - forever frozen. Effect of his touch on her.

And who, when it comes to the crunch, can live with a heart of gold? That night, I dreamt I bore his child, its perfect ore limbs, its little tongue like a precious latch, its amber eyes holding their pupils like flies. My dream-milk burned in my breasts. I woke to the streaming sun.

Dreams of their golden child - mainly positive yet lifeless description. "ore" and "amber" link to gold.

Milk will only ever remain a dream as she can't bear his child - alliteration of harsh sounds to show the pain she feels at this loss.

Rude awakening.

Tries to hide him from others as she's ashamed of what he's become and what he's made her.

So he had to move out. We'd a caravan in the wilds, in a glade of its own. I drove him up under cover of dark. He sat in the back. And then I came home, the women who married the fool who wished for gold. At first I visited, odd times, parking the car a good way off, then walking.

Beginning to detach herself - no regular visits.

Alliteration to draw attention to the damage he's causing.

You knew you were getting close. Golden trout on the grass. One day, a hare hung from a larch, a beautiful lemon mistake. And then his footprints, glistening next to the river's path. He was thin, delirious; hearing, he said, the music of Pan from the woods. Listen. That was the last straw.

Short sentence to show how abruptly she decided to cut him out of her life.

Short sentence shows how bitter she is about his blatant disregard for her feelings.

What gets me now is not the idiocy or greed but lack of thought for me. Pure selfishness. I sold the contents of the house and came down here. 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.

Despite unleashing all her anger and separating herself she can't help dwelling on what she's lost and how little she has.

Carol Ann Duffy

Themes

- * Love
- * Loss
- * Relationships