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A Gypsy Tale

In the cold brightness of a night  
That will never be seen again,  
In a place far across turbulent waters,  
Lived a girl who was  
Or was not bewitched.

I was there  
I heard and saw everything  
But I had to flee  
And that is why I cannot show proof.  
I myself would not have believed it  
Had there been no moon,  
Had I not seen with my own eyes  
How—yelping alchemy—  
They ripped off her gown  
And bound her  
Then whipped a piebald stallion  
To drag her  
Through the cobble-stoned quarter  
Of the town.

Now every family owns its stories  
And nobody knows its ways  
But when first they took her—  
Circled her,  
Taunted her  
Pointed—  
She shrieked an ancient curse  
And from behind every tree  
In the village,  
In the surrounding woods,  
The barbed notes  
Of her clan's peculiar whistle  
Punctured the air,  
And the slime

The accusers' eyes  
Had left on her breast  
Changed to a diamond spray  
And stayed that way  
Even after we bathed her  
And clipped her nails,  
And perfumed her hair,  
And wrapped her in a velvet shroud  
And eased her into the grave.

This was so, my dears,  
We could do such things  
In those days, believe me,  
What happened, happened,  
That's how it was,  
Though we are told they lived well  
In those days  
And we are said to live better.