

4-2011

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On the day Knife  
be ready for a fight.  
But on the day Star  
I am what you are.

There is no day Star.

That light you see's a  
crack in the curtain  
a split seam  
in the mirror tugged  
too tight over the  
curves of the world:

I am hair and you are skin  
then we are the other way again.

29 April 2011

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Birds are building nests in our eaves.

If you believe in the world too much

it cracks open and lets you see

the other animal it is trying to be,

not just me. It is water in the sap

of maple trees, shadows in the grass,

children playing with knives...

and you thought you were the only beast!

29 April 2011

## MIRANDA

1.

That letter from Prospero you found  
seemed at first remote from our concerns—  
that's what makes love possible,  
almost inevitable.

Every bird at all  
misses its third wing  
so he runs down the hall  
squeezes her waist  
and runs away—

history  
is made of this,  
glad sorrow of us  
always only one love at a time.  
*And every third thought*  
he'll think of dying  
and all the other two  
continue to be you.

2.

Watch watch.

Break breakfast.

Lift your wrist

and lick the wound.

A day is more

than beginning.

Clouds are fugitives

from a cold night.

The cause is the effect.

The woman understood it

all too well, forgave

his intimacies now as

all her life his distances.

“Father, what aileth thee

that thou need’st me again

who once for all did pour

out of you into the silent

nameless personage who made

my body, my lady Mother?

Wouldst thou retract me

into thine own solemnity,

ambiguity? O the brazen clock

Giulio Romano made for us

displayed the Goddess Vesta  
her hips swaddled tight as Ægypt  
and no celebration!”

3.

But he was silent then  
writing one more little prophecy  
he’d leave for her tucked  
snug in the crook of a hornbeam tree,  
low woodwork of that island.  
He heard her vaguely  
but only one thing clear to him,  
*They are all my daughters.*

29 April 2011

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The important thing is to have something to worry about.  
The gates of hell stand open night and day, as Virgil  
reminds us, the man who stood in a friend's vineyard  
listening to the ragas bees hum in sunlight, all ears.  
Easy to go down there, hard to come back this way out.  
Or up. We are only what we hear. Without worry  
we would (and who is this 'we' we're speaking of?)  
just laze in laxness like a water-logged summer novel  
all mildew and intrigue, pages stuck, a butterfly goes by.  
Things do dry out eventually, Hell does freeze over,  
well-known fact. Lie there thinking about Vikings,  
names of your friends, smell of freesia, creep of history  
towards tomorrow afternoon. It will get there surely,  
never fear. Now find something new to fret about.

29 April 2011

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I once knew how to do something

I can't do anymore.

Something to do with washing dishes

or watching a friend do them,

wet hands, soapy water rinsing off

fluorescent light and sunlight mingled,

something to do with rye bread on the sideboard,

moss on the window ledge, sleeping late.

29 April 2011



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The clifftop hurries to the horizon  
on the cliff a young man stands  
who takes charge of all this  
who is the lord of childhood fantasies

he acts them out, here, on earth,  
between air and ocean, himself  
a piece of the sky—and he too  
once bore your name.

30 April 2011

[The first four lines intact on the way from dream.]

## AT A READING

This next poem

is silent.

During the silence

I will say some words

to help you hear it.

30 April 2011

= = = = =

How far can I trust  
my hands to say  
what you need to hear?

Come back to me  
who never left you,  
you are the shape of time

when all the lilacs  
understood eternity,  
and space itself

needs us  
to shape it—  
that's where you

come in,  
I saw you move  
when all the rest were still.

30 April 2011

= = = = =

Where did the beginning go?

I was sleeping

the sun was shining

things do what they know how to do

the wheel was turning

and then it stopped—

felloe split? axle

shattered? No, this

wheel has no axle

it stands still all the time

and things roll round it,

We are wheel and it is waiting.

30 April 2011

## BOSTON TULIPS

*for Betty*



Wild as weather  
they hide in color

the street knows nothing  
of them, the tree  
is like their sentinel,

the Wren Street bus  
goes by and early Monday  
picks up half a dozen

quiet children  
who have nothing yet  
but yellow tulips

with brazen hearts  
and small purple red  
ones that hide

even from themselves.  
Which is also  
what childhood means.

30 April 2011