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Robert Kelly
Bard College

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THE NOTARY

1.

Here as far as I can—
a notary sealing a merchant's will
with the sun. We all are wax
he thinks, we take the marks
pressed into us. We do
what we're told.

2.

The merchant dies, the widow
sighs, the notary
goes back to the novel he's been at
so many years he can barely
remember if he's writing it or reading it.
Who else could know all these facts
but me, he thinks. Then know
everybody could, we are born
knowing everything.

3.

Then we wait for something
to happen. Books
help us to forget. In the courtrooms
year after year the heirs
contend about the merchant's will.

4.

The notary is summoned but fails to attend,
he's taken to his bed, perhaps to die,
perhaps just lie there listening to blackbirds
shrilling on the roof tiles. What do they find
that keeps them busy with singing and such.
Such energy to palaver about nothing!
They're as bad as we are, Or maybe good
is what I mean. He sleeps. Let him sleep.

5.

I mean I am here as far as I can,
I have played into this moment
with all my strength, shoved myself
into this fragile hour.
I have nothing to sell

and nothing to testify.
Either I am a shape on the horizon
or I am the horizon itself,
and yet, though horizons are the furthest
things in all the world,
I insist that I am here. Here.
I don't blame you for being shocked
at how close I seem to be.

6.
Yet being here at all
is the gravest presumption.
An arrogance, almost,
like sunlight on snow.

6 January 2008

BEATUS VIR

Some people think it's about lions playing the harp
and cocktails rain or shine at five – what is
a Pink Lady anyhow? – and somebody out there
to keep the Lexus polished. Maybe so, I don't know,
and that's the brunt it it. What is a brunt anyhow?
Some people think life is a board game called Society
with bright squares, snakes and ladders style, dice
to roll in neat leather cups, winnings and losings
and tax shelters on some not quite ex-colonial
island in the heat. And the soul plays Monopoly
all its own, popes and tzaddiks and rinpoches,
real estate deals in the afterlife. What is
death anyhow? I feel like such an infant
in these matters, I can't get started (a song
before my time) with all these stated as-
pirations. I wait for buses in the drizzle.
I smile at pretty girls in the subway. Shy
maybe, but still wandering around. The moon
still means a lot to me, I'm not sure what.

6 January 2008

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To be shot dead in dream
means.

One of my lives
is gone.

I still feel the two slugs
entering my chest,
painless, I see them too,
two black hot lumps
spread my meat open,
the flake of bone.

They must have gotten me in the heart.

One more death to make sense of,
one less death to die.

6 January 2008

THINGS LOOKING

at and like things.

A thing and a thing
looking at it.
And some crows.

Morning's lewd light
belongs us
to the place

to the no-place bright
you can only get to
through the place

things looking at things
we look between.

7 January 2008

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That was the explanation
embedded in the crow call.

Another crow. They patrol
the sky, chase hawks
away from little birds.

The cow presumably
ends life with the best
karma of any animal
for her next life
as human or as god.
Presumably the cow.

The crow likewise among birds
—yet giveth not its body
to be consumed by us.

Whereas the cow.

Cow and crow and where are we?

When have I ever chased a falcon from the sky
when have I fed anybody at all on my flesh?

7 January 2008

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The lovely presumption
of having something to say.
To irritate the onlooker
with words cut out of felt
and pressed in layers of tallow
like you know who,
another flimflam artist of the Rose+Cross,
another me or two along the way to him
who is to come,
render our fat and flense our prose
and make some sense of our poetry
while drinking copiously from an empty bottle
and eating shadows with a knife and fork.

7 January 2008

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When is a voice like the sky
when it answers
a question you always forget to ask.

But when is a man most like a woman
when he picks up a sword and goes to war

But when is a woman most like a man
when she lies on the sofa and dreams about the moon.

7 January 2008

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All of us do
our mother's work in the world

except the special few who do
our father's. Art in heaven.

7.1.08

= = = = =

It's probably not the same. Cthulhu
reading his mail below the sea
waiting for that invitation only you
know how to give, the one you thought
with some intensity one night
when you thought you were alone.

But that's the glory and the problem
with the world, one is never alone,
not even for a second, some god is always
watching, and if not him, then always
Isis is nearby, always nearby, her face
veiled, all the beauty of the world

right there, a breath away. You feel
her breath, or the tiny flutter
of the air when her veil trembles
at her breath, not everything is direct,
everything gets there, gets to you,
and you know it. You feel it in the dark,

it is the thing you think is you.

7 January 2008

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We stand in the light of our moon
not the one over the frontier.

The rain that falls here wets me,
not you in your dry abode
on the other side of language.

8 January 2008

= = = = =

The snow lies up the hill
scripted with tree shade.

A shadow is anything but random,
is a precise expression
of an equation not easy to write down

but someone knows
angles and intercepts and incidents of light.

They must, I'm sure of it,
staring out
the big clean windows of my ignorance.

8 January 2008

= = = = =

To know all we know
and still know nothing.

Sunshine is a risk,
the lethal aspirin
lurks beneath the tongue.

Bitter taste of things
kept too long in mind,

sound of a sliding door
on a panel truck,
delivery is now.

Nothing to remember.

The willow is the first
to know the spring
and show it.

Gold something happens
in its vague branches.

But not yet. Time
remains an aspiration.

Nothing to forget.

8 January 2008

= = = = =

But it was the Queen of Diamonds not of Hearts
it was a black seven I forget the suit
it was raining the car was locked
there was nobody in the street
there was money in the pockets

I was alone with my self-deceptions
I could have been any age but I am now

8 January 2008

= = = = =

Bracken. What it means.
A glass broken
in the woods. Gorse
or whin. The spikes
of someone else's house.

Real estate. Land.
Property. These words
hurt. On your own feet
you stand. Nothing
on anybody else's

anything. Ever.
Thorns. Ferns. Far
as I have come
there is no here
around me, just me

standing in a place
that defines me
but gives me no clue
about itself. It hides.
The man said it all

hides, that's what it does.
She does. Her veil
enormous. Endless.
But to lift it. Worth
a life to do it, it

is what life's about.
Not a penetration.
A permission. Leaves
of their own power
flourish from twigs.

The veil lifts away
in the simplest breath.
You see the one you
have always meant
to see. To be.

8 January 2008

FUN

is the untranslatable
despondency of time

let loose on a mind
all at once,

the funhouse is where the floors
tilt away from the footsteps
and the staircase falls.

Fun is space turned back into time
compressed, breathless laughter
and tears soon after but not yet.

9 January 2008

= = = = =

Are we there yet?
Is the plum
ripe already
on the cherry tree
is the coal in my
cellar a diamond yet?

Once I wanted
everything to be
a woman and it was.

9 January 2008

JANUS

the War Gate
has been open all my life—

Spain, Shanghai, Ethiopia,
the mountains of everywhere.

I pray to the god Janus,
Lord of Doors,
father of openings:

father, shut at last the iron door.

9 January 2008

Four Senses for Susan

When all the air
is held inside
it's called a word
waits to be said

When all light
is held inside
it's called an eye
smiling back

When all the earth
waits underneath
it's called the skin
that holds you in

When all the water
runs down the hill
it's called feeling
everything new.

for Susan Quasha on her Birthday, 9 January 2008