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25. K.503

It always is another room
other people talking there
in other language

only the light comes through the door
gold inflected from the chandeliers
a few real candles among electric tapers:

I am staring at and into the doorway
from across the empty lobby

revelers and stately gamblers
spilling their glamorous time

for what else have we to give?
A tree of poinsettias,

Wiesbaden wiedersehen
and Heine's low Taunus hills

catskilling away I saw
just before Christmas north

and a camel lumbered down the street
its shabby wiseman saying nichts

not even ogling women, just
being there as a reminder

to bring something to our mind
but what? And what are they saying

all of them in their elegant languages
in the bright casino, why

can I see everybody and understand nothing?
Or is that the same as beauty itself

naked, no palaver, no resonance
but the intensity of presence

a child staring at bright lights
a woman in a blue dress and the dress shines?

You go away five years and meditate
scarlet bracts on a dull tree, that's all,

child looking, dimly but intensely
conscious, the way children are,

his mother sobbing in another room,
someone lost, something missing,

one more thing he can't understand
I can't understand.

Be beautiful while it can.
They'll let you look your fill

and fail to speak. It is here: gold,
it really is, tell what happened,

what happened is what counts, old father,
ram in a thicket, sullen obedience,

rain on New Years, night of power,
camel in the market, Roman altar,

shadows by the museum and through them
a harlot passes, meets me at the river,

such a little river, speaks to me
one more sentence I'll never understand.

It is here. It is all round. It glows
and it is wet. It shimmers everywhere.

It is not meant for me to understand.

But that's too easy.
You're in the country
too long, be quick,
hop over your shadow,
stop telling, start talking,
make it up
like the face
of your first love,
make it up
that had been down
lost in perceiving,
wave the flag
of the imaginary republic
over the battlefield,
all these gambled
and lost for something,
something golden
rapturous and true
but who?
It's up to you
to make a who
of what had been it.

II.

Is it rain?
Head lightly over music, ran,
no heard, rain,
like one more woodwind
offered to the sense of organic form,

could this be hearing,
the tiny copper filaments of the ear,
the brush that writes the sound upon the feelings,
rain on top of music?

On the day Seven-Rain
an American day, a good day
to wear new clothes.
Break an old word
and take the new word out.

As it gets true
the word gets short
till you can say it
in one breath,
no more, one breath
is all we need
to say it, to keep
the heart straight
if you have one
or find a new heart
if you lost the last
one you had in that
bright hall at cards
or love or just
left it on the couch
next to you and then
lost sight of it when
you got up to sniff
at a rose or stroll
out in the yew hedge
the maze in moon.

III.

I really did. Did you?
I tried but there were too many,
from everywhere, I know a couple languages.
tried them, failed, the camel
plodded through the Christmas market
sluggish as a citizen, the Arab
at his side might not have been so wise
but there he was. We watched,
safer than watching people. But those
are what we wanted. Those we love.
For them we came down from heaven
disguised as starlight, crept
into your mother's womb,
she thought she was just admiring
some amber in a jeweler's window

by the Grand Duke's garden
but it was us, inside her already,
admiring the whole world
through her shine, this amazing
arrival, the mother of all mothers,
she who is alive and wanted us
and we wanted her and there you are,
all of you, people in the winter street,
for you we came down from heaven
and sprawl in the gutter of your lewd
bodies, milk and blood and lymph
and god knows what inside you,
chyme and hormones and dreamy
chemicals sloshing round us as we endure
the musical material that soon
will spring us to be seen, moving
among you through the market,
hurrying sometimes, even whistling
when a little drunk, but never
saying a word, we have nothing
to report, we are here, enough,
here for your casual beauty, people,
people, there is no place
in the universe more beautiful than you.

1 January 2007

26. K.537 “Coronation”

Would there be triumph here
without the name?

Leaves without a tree.

Questions seep into assertions,
a woman walks along a battlement
everything is always waiting

a nervous man at your elbow
wondering how fate brought you to this encounter

served and server
some food at stake

then babel starts
the ordinary conversation of the deliberate day.

Your hands are cold
Don't touch me
A raft is on the river
Come flee with me

into the intergovernmental agencies
that rule the stars

every human ruler is the shadow
of a crazed autarch elsewhere

sometimes up to good
just often enough for us to forget

it's mostly not.

Hence dance.
Long song.

We paint an image on the sunbeam

and kneel down to worship it
then sob when a cloud decides to come

at least a girl like you is kind
the neighbor's cat
the charitable volunteer

I am the rock where everything changes
but you have heard that line before,
I put the names of things in at random

to make you think the world is real
and my discourse somehow subtends it
sweater streetlight toaster full moon

but all those things are just the sounds
of themselves, assassins, museum replicas
you bought in the mail, mall, no, none,

there are no more words, and things
have had enough of your caress
so there's only one nationality left for you

a place to stand but there are no places
no island and no sea, a mere
continuity like the strange

colors you see when you close and press your eyes—

that is your homeland.
You never did care about the rock
and all those trees just fragrant obstacles
though sometimes in the endless plain
you were glad enough to nap in their shade

dreaming what?
a wordless thingless certainty
you woke from feeling comforted,
loved even, even known.

II.

Red harbors.
Not here again,
so close to the frontier

my shadow
falls in the other country.
Doesn't it always, dear?

Yes, but it isn't always France.
There is a post that marks the border,
a goshawk on it, who could that be?

I get afraid often in the afternoon,
I ask myself why I'm doing what I'm doing
and not something else worthier or truer
but what could that be? Or I ask
why the word I'm writing down isn't a better word
telling a better story in a better tune,
I get afraid when I do what I do
because it's always me doing it
if it even really is,
I get afraid that I am no one
using someone's instruments
for some preposterous vivisection
of an imaginary animal,
afraid I'm no one using someone's words
to hide what I don't have to say,
sometimes in the afternoon
I get afraid of listening to my shadow
smiling or sneering at me from across the frontier
like a smart young man who's been reading Valéry.

III.

Wake up it is yesterday
tomorrow, and the light plays tricks
seeming through saplings—

nimbleness is all,
to get lost in thinking
and then spring out of it again

deer-footed, leaving neat pellets

inoffensive on the neighbor's lawn.

we walked by the river
on New Years Day
mist and clouds then finally
that circumstance
technically called Glory
coming at us from the southwest,
the sun herself clear over the hills
under the momentarily suspended clouds,

leap, from perceiving to perceiving,
leaving children to play on the cold grass
when we've drained it of our shadows.

Let everything begin again, Herod cried.
But there is no again, lord,
only the same children playing on the lawn
alive or dead,
or what lawn you left them,
Biafra, Somalia, Darfur,
just names, of course, the names
are the only things we really do know how to change.

Of course it's sad.
Music has to turn its back
on human misery
to exist at all. All
its nimbleness is fugitive.
Just as I here, for you, now,
running from my own shadow
show you how it's done.

2 January 2007

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Hothouse names, date tree
wooden footbridge over
intermittent rill

soft lift of the conductor's stick
silver necktie black jacket
the sense of order, the greenhouse

full of butterflies. Know
enough to see over what is.

2 January 2007

(*dreamt:*)

Art
is the is
of of.

(Writing it down, it wobbled:

Art
is the is
of how.

Art
is the is
of this.)

(And after writing these down:

Art
is the bee
in being.)

= = = = =

Full moon. Green moonlight
on the bare branches,
the shed roof,
the ground.

The true colors of things at last.

Makes it like snow
just fallen. And no snow.

2 January 2007

27. K.595

Everything comes from far away
but the far away turns out to be
something deep inside here—

perhaps in the sense that someone who travels
is always more or less who is
no matter where he goes,

or there are changes,
perceptions, character brought into the open,
he sees only what he is prepared to see,
or things always getting clearer
or hidden in the lyric importunities of travel,
absurd lingering identities a place confers
stuck in your mind after you've left it,

remembering and all that
like Mozart on the road to Prague.

So it turns out that this is really about everything,
not perhaps every
thing, but everything of which statements can be made
that make any kind of sense

like: everything you are you take with you
on the road to Prague.
No road but a journey, a journée,
a day and a night of flickering experience,

everything you are comes with you,
cat and car and nurse and kid,
family bible and Britannica,
coal scuttle, parakeet, tea towel
porringer, statuette of Saint Lucy
holding her eyes in her hand,

easy, a traveler's mind is like a hand
nibbling at the keys of a piano
while the other hand holds a letter

someone wrote you, someone
is still writing you after all these years,
and her too you take on the road to Prague,
night and day you keep working
just to get to the next day,
next note, every decade an octave higher
until you pass the brink of human hearing
and still you go on, you read the letter,
you fingers mumble some tuneless sequence,
one guess at a time, *journée, satis iam*
the fields are full of weather
we were soaked despite the new shellac
varnished on our coachwork, if only
it were Sunday we could stop for Mass.

But there's no stopping now,
you are committed to observation
and your insufferable patrons
demand verbose reports, tell all
they told you, you do, you try
jumping down and running up the hill
but from the top see just another hill,
the road voracious for your company,
tell them everything, they have no lives
and need them to sing into their ears
as if they were living and the music
meant more than the passing wind does.
And it does. This thing you do
is about everything. You bring it with you
forward and forward till it is only what you are.

II.

There is a medicine
shaped like a leaf,
bring it to me.
There is a barrier
somewhere in the world
make sure the gate is locked.
Let no one break in
between one thought and the next—
if I weren't so close to the frontier
I wouldn't worry, or would I,
strangers keep trying to get in.

And they stand there some
mornings like leaves on a tree
just looking in at me
till I think I hear their thoughts
thinking, their terrible homeless
thoughts desperate for the Exile's
Dream, the little cottage where
for one little lifetime you
don't have to wonder *Where*
shall it go next with me?
The randoming. The curse of
fleeing, no one understands—
I hear their thoughts, make
no more sense than raindrops
from the eaves after the rain
has stopped, who are these
thinkings, who are these folk
against whom I have locked my door?

The question, so phrased, romantically,
despises easy answers. But you know who they are.
If you were very young you'd call them lovers,
bailiffs of the heart, businessmen who come
quietly and wave bags of money, offering
once more to write your requiem for you.

III.

Turkish fabric, Indian shawl, madder,
indigo, green and white of hellebore,
sun shining on them, winter sun
and amaryllis coming to a head,
signs, fiber, we wear clothes
just to put colors on our skin, colors
we change every day of the week as
Monday moon day white or silver,
Tuesday Mars day scarlet of blood,
so on, except on those full moon nights
when moonlight is green and frosts
the earth as if a snow had fallen
but no snow. We walk in colors
because of all things we trust color most,
and when colors fade we know how to weep
salt tears, mordant tears, when colors
fade we fade with them until love herself

brings us a new blue shirt
strong as the night
and we put on the sky.

There, that's where it's been going all along.
Enskymment of simple folk,
we, the children who believe everything we are told
because all everything is is what can be told
and there isn't anything on the ground or in the sky
you can't tell me about or I can't hear.
Remember that when you put on your new sweater,
the quiet one, the one I thought at first
too old for you, color of ancient Greek bronze
in sunlight, the one with little shiny beads sewn on
that draw the shape on you of something like leaves.

3 January 2007

= = = = =

it is trying to get your attention
it wants you to look at it
it is saying: write about me,
come ride in me
to the mysterious plantation
where Uncle Robert was last seen
trying to turn kudzu into something psychedelic
and all his nephews and their wives
fled into the misty trees.
Swedes have these weird ideas about Amerika.
Like Kafka or Karl May. Never
believe what a car wants you to think.

Celia Bland wrote:

There's a blue Volvo station wagon in the parking lot closest to new Henderson
that has its lights on.

4 January 2007