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=====
No man alive has seen Mohammed's face
only the green fire
that stands between
a man and the sky

stands for his face.

When you see the green flame
you'll know it's he
and our traditions make you sure

no devil can take his form
even in dream.

But no man has seen the actual face,
and what do we think when we look in fire,

study all the thousand faces there
rising and falling, all of them
telling us something, no face
ever silent, and every fire speaks?

10 April 2004

THE MEETING

“Thereafter
one had delight in
waking”

 Miriam said,
after that meeting
sad as it was
 (“Don’t touch me

for I am sick with life
again, I would hurt
to have,

darling,
we are always,
there is no *again*,”
he had said)

but sadness is a part of it too,
delight, her delight
a devious mathematics
each woman knows,
works out for herself,
how much story
is worth how much pain

“but pain is so general”

she said

“it is urgent we distinguish

thorns that are natural

from pinpricks inflicted,

distinguish malaise from disease,

so many discomforts

so many anguishes

and only one mind to hold them,

no wonder it’s so easy to be swamped

and think I am the pain or pain is all I am,

but it’s all just a cup

a cup full or empty

evaporating in the sun or leaking by moonlight—

so he died

my cup was bitter full

but he came back

and it was suddenly

empty, then he told me

not to touch him

and it was overflowing

but then he said

he would be with me

forever, empty again,
but with everyone everywhere
always also
and the pain seeped back
to be not special,

o the tides of it
and why do I bother
and who do I believe>

it all is a calculus
given to reckon

how much can I bear
in the endless delight
it stabs me through?

We meet now in the evening and share our cup,
he gave me so much I will never forgive him.”

11 April 2004

Easter

=====

I have to know so much to be me
and no time to get it.

All my mendacities
mean not to disappoint.

I am Houdini. I do it
with mirrors of course.

Or sledge hammers. Or holding
my breath for a year while
daffodils grow out of my chest.

The trick is the words
always have some business in each town.

They are my accomplices,
they know what you're thinking,
all I have to do is write them down.

11 April 2004

Easter

=====

Something I need
you to remind
a woman's voice
another language

11 April 2004

VINCA

sun over fence over periwinkles
it begins to be time

but time is a giant
waiting only

from across the lawn
I hear someone say

‘a flower’
as if in answer.

11 April 2004

=====

So many words
left in this bottle
so many adventures
after noon

11 IV 04

THE ANXIETIES OF SPRING

In that mood a man
hears every wind a love song

something late
rustles in the underbrush

and something talks—
any citizen owns spring

any single voice
owns all the words.

2.

City was I born
who now in silence

an old place
gone from syntax

is just things tastes
flowers distances

rabbi, why
are there ships

why does anyone go?

the change between

one remembering

and the next,

horizon,

what am I not

3.

what am I not

seeing when I see

this smooth pebble

agate I know

my fingers turn it

over agate

can it be

the other side

of the world

I touch it

rabbi, can here
be there?

can a tree grown down
can it meet me here

in the schoolroom
of the tongue

tombstones
of dead saints

all the alphabets
all the birds

that broke against
the sky and fell?

11 April 2004

=====

Cast me as bread before

or follow behind

the boundless, school of sleek

delphines in their shoals

current across what

amplitudes of living room

hold such conversations

pigeon princess arbiter of

the working truth

no one really gets to linger

it's all built out of doubt

makes such diamonds that my master

47th street arcane exchanges

here is my Swiss gold here is your weather

for they gave us the whole world in exchange

fit it to your next smallest finger

and be Mandalay, cock pagodas

gilded with your currency,

a hip hop lap, white trash truancy

and this traviata became God's mother

just like you, for any girl

can compass it, and any boy

protect it from the wolves the wheat the bronzes

intemperate with real estate
how to get that youngling through
into the mitzvah he was meant to be
moon of Sinai simoom of Dakota
somewhere between her hands she held
destinations of the entire soul

the one of which all identities are
glints and recollections and explosions
kidnapped by a guess of other
from the safe of some, of course they'll kill him
every mother is aware of that
it's the first thing she knows when she
feels him inside her, this subway lurch
south of her heart where the tracks split
and her life careens and she knows too well
this one that hides in her will hide from them

but they will find him and there he'll be
half-man half-god half-tree
the foolish mathematics of divinity
bleeding our salvation
look at me and remember.

12 April 2004

=====
And I think I dreamt of snow
surprised me even so so that I thought
why am I dreaming into snow
among such amazing animals?

To dream that you're knowing
is prison, to know that you're dreaming
is liberty, a latin word, to be
a rich young man again means freedom.

Be alternate with energy!
Be an electric light in a toilet bowl,
let the universe of mystery
squander itself sudden into understanding!

So little wit and all that mania
yet I too grasp that fire critter
that eel of light that writhes out of the tomb
and permanently scars the sky with stars—

we make those lights!
we manufacture universes!
Nature is our half-remembered dream!

12 April 2004

=====

Encumbered with seas
the journey invents
a map made out of breath—
do not breathe for instance
until the white tree
comes into view.

Then breathe like a rock.
Breathe like the sky.
Overcome inertia by
holding my hand tight.

Our clothes are wet
even before the rain already begins.

12 April 2004

A SPIDER QUESTIONS GRAVITY

Fastening on *things to know*
what is it that we do they do
those others
organized on different numbers,
4, 6, 8, or none or many?

Number rules me
and what is true in 2-land
is so only there.
There must be other *ways to go*,
the *others'* way to go
a snake's idea of rapid transport
slowly turn into our machines
of course we will have wheels

inline skaters Larmarck
catastrophe the measure
changes, out of its own body
or its little earth
the spider builds
universal gravity

if I could go to her school
I could walk in these clouds.

13 April 2004

=====

What if we turn into
each other on the way?
Will the roses still smell red
and thorns still make me cry?

How will I ever understand
the higher doctrine of your skin
and feel the symphonies of air
I think you walk in?

I am an acolyte of earth
and scarce know how to guess
the immense philosophies you
just by being you possess

because you are other you know
the meaning of each thing
I walk in your shapely shadow
and listen to you sing.

13 April 2004

THEOGONY

Catch the miller
asleep behind the mill
and interview his daughter
until we both turn white

and she has left no
grain undisclosed.

Then I will be her mill
and grind all night
so by morning
we'll all be gone

just a millstone left
gleaming in the sun.

13 April 2004

=====

after George Hamel

Everything I hide ends up in words
which are always the best place to keep them
since no one knows. Reads. Remembers.
Understands. The J train coursing overhead
up Crescent St to the Jamaica curve
drowns out the sound. The flickering
ruby taillights in the rain are so exciting
they wipe out the sense. I can't see
in the dark, can you? What's left
when sight and sound and sense are gone?
A man hiding what he thinks he thinks.
And I would too, considering what it's like
to be known, to be far from home
and then come home. To be hard at work
always. No wonder he puts the words away,
to hide in the sky like the stuff we breathe—
o darling, have you ever seen the air?

13 April 2004

<late> =====

The emir of the obvious

leads the procession again.

Dark words, long sentences.

Prolapse of democratic institutions,

checks unbalanced.

Strawberry flavored bismuth syrup

coax a nation of absent-minded strategists

playing solitaire. Closet kings

and old men in Waikiki

playing swing in pink hotels.

That is why I come to you now

like a blue handkerchief speckled

with Uncle Barney's 'Golden Cardinal' snuff.

13 April 2004