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THE NIGHT CHEMISTS

When there was no moisture
to extract from the air

when there were signs
you couldn't read

a staircase you stumbled down
loud and passionate the fall

always upright the heel the hand
the sleepwalker

finds her way to the stable
climbs on a sleeping horse

and how fast they go
down the stairs and out the sky

I thought at long last
I was the same machine

and I could find you in my skin
at the unawakened hour

when all our ignorances align
sleep matching

all that traveling comes home
to a place like a tree

in a shadow like a book
and I will never leave you.

19 August 2002

If you don't say anything

the word comes true

the one you don't break

by pronouncing

there is so much licit listening

and everybody's speaking

that's why this word you don't

reaches me by night

and wakes me up knowing

the simple certainty

of what you actually mean.

19 August 2002

Listen to the low becoming

how the hand handles

the skin feels

the truth

is near. Interruptions

help you where it is.

Know.

A mask

holding a camera.

Old manuscript you find

romantic to the end

in the desert

the only

words you can make out

are your name.

19 August 2002

THE ATLAS

Find out where here is
then the bush will blossom

by its own laws or not
no need for you to worry

though worry also
helps things to grow.

You are dependable
hence in contingency

you live, always depending
we are only

what we say we are
but no one asks you

you are too busy telling
all I ever meant was you.

20 August 2002

To be a species against nature

I demand an enamel
tree a Portuguese flower
from a sunken kiln
I want to travel
your famous caves
where the temperature
never changes

ovulation of a ruby
down there the intersection
of color and desire
hard as someone
looked and was afraid
all that life
and none of it
coming home with me.

Therefore the natural
thing is broken
open to let the truth out.

20 August 2002

BEEHIVE

Beehive other planet
people trapped themselves
in our atmosphere
and now, now
there is no difference

where a *difference* means
a way out of a situation.

The bees are stuck in our weather
like wheat in the field.
Someday the grain the honey and the salt
will all go home

leaving only amber in our shallow seas
to tell us what we and they had been.

20 August 2002

Too short too special
I am trying to share
my anxiety for a change
you give me your
solutions for once, your
calming animal
to snore quietly beside me
for a change, inside
me for a change, I can't
make myself good
I can only make myself you.

20 August 2002

AT THE WINDOW

The search is over
it was a cloud
with a hand in the middle of it

it floated over her bed
and the bars she'd had put on the window
did not keep it
from watching her watching it,

it was quiet there
that afternoon over the street

the grating cast its shadows
over her skin
soft shadow, clouds, clouds

but the light
was reaching towards her,
that far away hand
saying something close

alone as we are
having to be
the whole sky to ourselves.

20 August 2002

DUSTY TRAVEL

All the lords I meant to see
were ladies trapped in spiderlight

the glue of words affixed us both
to cardboard signs in obsolete museums

answering only to the scrutiny
of everything you picked up along the way

to be so naked now on a clean bed
in a flooded city. Where does water

really come from? Like everything else
it sustains us and kills and goes away.

I was a noble suitor, traveling my quest,
not much to show for all the years

meantime you watch the sunlight on your knees
and whisper to yourself the names of friends

or one friend's name over and over and over.

21 August 2002

BAS MITZVAH

Sometimes I can't bear to hear the other's voice,
the iceberg breaks off from the pack
they call this calving, how does this help you,
pale things move together in the world, you need
so many things and most of all the attentive
ocean never failing, the light is made of eyes
the skin is full of strange hearing, they gave you
a little word to say no bluer than the sugar
that made half a dozen years into chemicals
molecules of the actual among the whirling lights
the puberty of fingers and a man was speaking
it's all your glands and then my glands discover
hearing Hebrew spoken for the first time
and it was my mouth, I will be the commandment
and you will be at last my beautiful daughter
and we will live together on the arid mountain
knifing the sun every morning for our religion
this long light that bleeds into your hair.

21 August 2002

CHOOSING

It has to be you. The shape of things
makes us friends *tu sais*
to say that union
is our law is plenty

the sound of wind any rock can talk

but there were feathers tossed on the ground
inside the circle of boulders
where we made our soup

we are xenoliths in a quick world

but where are the birds whose wounds we heard
we thought it was dream when we fell together
downhill heels first

each injury an hour

I try to improvise your heart
and am left with feathers stuck in tapestry
the wind in tapestry

nothing moving but my breath

but being this mountain is better than wine
because we can be here before the meaning comes
summer sinner

did you give another ink
than this brackish milk?

sweat glands

stimulated by fine palladium wire
issue a nostalgic dew

 before we touch
I have to hold your pearls in my mouth
take them off

 words are too frivolous to tell

and if you want someone to know you
what you really think

 hold a pearl in your hand
or in a fold of skin a long time
then give it to someone, let it rest a while
in someone's mouth and let someone taste and remember.

21 August 2002

He recalled Matthisson, Schiller, Zollikofer, Lavater, Heine, and many others, with the exception of Goethe, as I've mentioned earlier. His memory still shows power and endurance. Once, I found it surprising that he had a portrait of Frederick the Great hanging on the wall and therefore asked him about it. He answered, "You have made that remark about it before, Herr Baron."

[Wilhelm Waiblinger (1830) on a visit to Hoelderlin]

He didn't remember Goethe.

The need of Goethe

(*Neige, neige*)

is terrible and great,

he didn't need

that terror that greatness

he was bent down

on his own, the crown

Kether of his hat

pulled low

over his brow

so he saw no one

but the children,

greeted with high

courtliness a two

year old. We bend

down to see.

At our best.

He remembers

what people said

not what they mean.

He remembers words

in the same way,

composes odes

in which the sense

is fugitive and lithe and fierce
and shy, a panther
running through a forest

after you. His words
follow me.
Wild onions
in the wild daisies
he tears them up
and stuffs them in his coat,
a coat
that you or I might wear
with hands like mine.

21 August 2002

FULL MOON

To be immortal
this way.
Or did it say 'this week?'

It is time to listen
harder or
what else is time for?

Everything else
we know already
except for how

the animal sounds
when it's wounded
crumples past its knees

groans a while and died.
We have to hear that
only once

and then we know that too.

22 August 2002

ASSIGNATION

Wait at the Mercy Station
I'll be there as soon as
they find the wrench they need
to tear open the door
in the middle of my head
and let me out of me,
so many things we need
and here we are I told you
we would be together at last
and here we are, even
if it is the next life and we
had to die a few times to
get here, blue trains
whip past, we had to wait
so long to choose
I'm here now with you
in the odd-smelling shadow
beyond the coke machine
I'm standing almost
inside you sucking my thumb
bruised by the wrench the
door the head the heart
the history that fucks us
running down the street
and always late and meet
you here where we are
where we have always
known it had to start.
To rearrange a whole

is not easy, life not easy
but it can be done,
cross your legs neatly
and gather your packages,
the one we need
is coming now, we both
hear it at once
and you finally see me
in the sound, you rise
and come through me,
we meet as the train
pulls into the station,
we fuse and we begin.

22 August 2002

THE PROBLEM

I am all the things you want me to be
and then some. That's the trouble isn't it
to be excessive in a minimal age

so you don't know who I really am
when "am" is supposed to name a simple thing
you could take a picture of it

striking and proud as a new disease.

22 August 2002

ENTERTAINMENT

All news is bad
but everything new is good.
This paradox
sustains our hugest industry.

22 August 2002