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a little bit about my life outside this room  
our room, about me  
that I was trained as an economist  
here's for today and last time  
thank you for waiting  
and thanks for not making such a fuss  
about my forgetting my checkbook last week

and even he I sometimes want to cherish  
hold him to my heart  
and answer his stifled questions  
child of my process  
with glorious half-truths and thrilling reinforcement  
sometimes I hold him in my mouth  
to taste the difference  
what I wouldn't give to give away what I keep so hard  
always holding on  
teach me to let go  
it sounds like a nice thing to say but do you want to  
I want to stop clutching  
I clutch at everything  
and then it clutches back

wouldn't growing older be letting go?  
the more you are the more you have  
more have more hold  
and there are habits like the salt in food

and I forget who I'm talking to  
then the truth comes out  
looks around and goes back in  
who are you talking to now  
is there a doctor in the house  
blues comes from blue devils  
there were pills made from mercury  
to cure syphilis cure  
the madness came from syphilis  
love sickness all  
madness comes from sex  
that's true isn't it doctor  
whatever they tell you outside  
it's true isn't it  
sex makes you crazy  
whether you do it or hold it in  
love is just a complication in that disease  
do you have a family, doctor  
do you go home at night to a standard life  
I am a telephone did you know that  
I don't know don't care to know  
whose voices speak and where they're from  
what does it matter who screws the bulb in  
the lamp comes on and we all see  
I think the light is like a single word  
someone out there knows how to pronounce  
did you ever read about Kabbalah

how god is a face and his name  
is the same as someone else  
and we sit all night playing bingo in the temple  
to shift around the letters and the numbers  
do you know every number means something  
and when she gets a certain set of numbers  
the old woman cries Bingo and gets her prize  
but young mystical boys with long black hair  
sneak in and steal her winning card  
then they know the word  
the absolute word of that relative night  
this is a fact I've seen it  
they take it home and study it  
and make computer programs to work it out  
because every winning card contains a secret  
the name of a powerful angel who rules tomorrow  
an angel that could bring them princesses and gold  
or all the beautiful silky carpets of Isfahan  
or tell you things that even you don't know  
when they decode the card they'll know  
who finally will love them and take them in  
that's all the world is ever waiting for isn't it  
doctor that's what sex also only is about  
that someone stands with a smile with an open door  
and says yes you're the one I'm waiting for  
now come in and stay as long as you like  
because my body is forever and I am yours

that's what the young boys are after their hair their dirty fingernails  
cut to the quick, their beautiful dark eyes their fleshy lips  
I've seen them pick the cards up off the folding tables in the hall  
seen them steal their grandmothers blind, steal the cards the words  
that come down from the mother of the world  
and sneak away with them to read them all night long  
like naughty French boys reading Genet by flashlight  
only the mystics study on sturdy dirty wooden tables  
under naked bulbs, all night they'd work  
and then days later I'd seen them these so-called religious students  
hollow-eyed but driving big Lexuses  
and I knew they had worked the numbers out  
and called out the pure names of power  
just at the going up of the dawn  
and the world heard them  
and made things fall into the places they called out  
the places they made by calling out their names  
don't you think we do that when we talk  
we're just rearranging dictionary words  
everything we'll ever say is in that book  
I notice you keep one on your desk  
do you ever open it at random and see what the day says  
when I came in today I looked up at your building  
as I always do and there was a seagull perched on your window  
I wanted to tell you when I came in but I forgot  
I think it was a sign of something a sort of sign

is it language? is it languish?  
and this languishing  
is only a long grieving  
a mirror for a lost sheen  
like when the rain dries on the pavement  
and all the swift red lights are gone

tail lights? tail lights?

bracket me  
to understand  
I keep all my doubts to myself  
what good are they to you  
whoever you are  
no value to the other  
serene alterity "I" postulates  
when spoken in an empty crowded room  
empty of you  
the one I really  
want to talk to  
is there only one  
in the gimcrack luster of our common room  
this poster of Joris Ivens  
this bronze rhinoceros  
when space has to dream itself open  
dream an opening into itself  
so you can come in

please come in and let me talk to you  
the one I really mean  
it's really weak and low of me to want it I want it  
I want the lustrous ear of your attention  
your rich hair curled around your hearing  
you who are the other pole of me  
negative ion that lets me breathe  
free in the crowded emptiness of my life  
never mind your money

masturbation is the next step up from sex  
she said and I confess it startled me  
as if you could go alone  
to that holy mountain Noah landed on  
Mount Marriage Mount Ararat propagation  
each according to her kind  
and no me needed to that complex sacred you

as if you could enter the Sabbath  
you and God taking turns in the dark

I confess her statement startled me wordless  
I confess I left it and her unresponded to  
so once more she drifted out dissatisfied  
I confess I wonder how much longer she'll keep coming  
how long she will accept the deferral of her desires  
I confess I push the envelope

I confess I frustrate her more often than I need to  
because I want to see what she will do  
I confess I'm a little bit afraid of losing her  
I am not afraid of using her  
we are here in Eden to be used  
I confess I'm looking for a way to bring it up again  
the word she said  
just in case she was when she said it  
standing on some giant shoulders  
and could see for a moment over the actual wall  
and could see what sex really was about  
and what it was and how it moved and where how far it could go  
and what would be there when we got there  
and she wasn't just being clever  
my gut feeling is she was just being clever and she is clever  
I don't want to take a chance though  
of missing vistas her sick eyes might see

a car flashing in and out of sunlight  
shadow road  
shallow go

I dreamed it again  
the boy with the guitar  
this time he came out and put the guitar  
down flat on the road  
then he lay down beside it  
and cars had to swerve around him



some drivers swore out the window  
some just swerve as if he and his guitar  
were roadkill or a dumb old dog  
the weird thing is that though he didn't touch it  
at all the guitar was playing  
I still can hear it  
music I didn't like actually  
I don't know what it was some sentimental folk song  
I could see the guitar strings pluck themselves  
I began to get uneasy almost scared  
something was coming  
I wanted to warn him  
but I felt paralyzed the way you do  
before I could do anything anyhow the truck was there  
a big white oil truck with a cartoon of a bee on it  
and it didn't even try to miss them  
it crushed the guitar in the middle of the music  
you could see splinters and flinders flying out from under the wheels  
but when the truck was gone the boy was still there  
he didn't seem hurt  
he was just lying there on his back  
looking up into the sky  
and he looked not shocked, just a little surprised  
and a voice in my head said  
he wonders where the music went

how did you feel then did you wake right up?  
I lay there wondering about it the way you do  
I had been so afraid before the truck  
but now nothing seemed so bad  
all that fear and anxiety  
had suddenly come and just as suddenly was gone  
and I lay there wondering what it would be like to be free

free?  
really free, not worrying about guitars or people  
just taking things as they come

is that what you think the dream was saying?  
I don't know, maybe I'm the guitar  
and he'll miss me when I'm gone

you think you are the guitar?  
I can't stand the monotony of being in love  
always worrying about him and what he's thinking  
instead of what I'm thinking  
always wrapped up in my feelings  
it's so sentimental it's degrading  
see the guitar was playing all by herself  
and he doesn't really care  
maybe the boy isn't even listening  
maybe that voice in my head is a lie  
or just my voice consoling myself

love is so boring  
so I think it was a dream of suicide

and here the mind is loath to follow  
how can the therapist  
protect the patient from her own insight  
how can he push her  
out of the snug house of interpretation  
into an affirmation  
false as it might be  
just to keep her going keep her living  
false it would be  
but false only to the moment  
we live by moments  
till the night comes  
when the moments slay us

there is a land beyond your feelings

but how can she be told it's there and how to get there  
he can't find it himself  
maybe they could go there together  
physician heal thyself  
go with her hand in hand  
the oldest mistake  
the ark the Ararat  
growing old together stifled in one room

you think plaster walls are some far horizon  
and sleep like Fafnir on a heap of feelings  
you'll never feel again

horror of being with the one you want  
he has to say something about suicide  
where she stopped her recitation  
and how she's waiting and what will he say  
what will he ever say  
live, live for me  
if you won't live for yourself  
you fool, do you need me  
even to adjust the will to live  
in you, must I reach in  
so deep and touch that valve?

suicide is such a self-important word  
the little threat that threads its way  
through so much discourse  
love me or I'll leave you alone in the world  
leave you crippled ever after  
you will grieve for me forever you will be paralyzed  
by closing down your feelings so you don't feel me  
sneering at you from the gates of death  
mocking you for the wicked thing you made me do  
making me leave the room forever

there are so many forevers in this conversations  
yet the word is a sort of safety  
when people start thinking of forever  
nothing can ever happen now

and Now is safe from all that rhetoric  
Suicide, you think? that's interesting  
had you been thinking consciously of it that day  
I always do, but thinking about it is so boring  
so humiliating, killing myself for love,  
it's just another shitty part of love  
of bad relationships  
has he been treating you badly lately  
it's not about him it's about me  
I feel humiliated by wanting him so much  
it doesn't matter what he does  
sometimes he's just exactly what I want and sometimes not  
but it's the non-stop wanting that makes me sick  
sometimes I'm just a rolled up ball of neediness  
whimpering in the corner of the bed  
that's why I feel I'm the guitar

the orderly unfolding of her career  
is distasteful to her friends  
she works hard at self-promotion  
so you know when you meet her  
you're only a rung on some ladder

her biggest dream is to leave you behind  
and always want her still and want her more

I have to cherish the unspeakable  
the least thing  
the leaf says

the wormhole in the woodwork  
through which another universe sneaks in  
or we fall out  
sometimes I'm nowhere  
but what I hear

and have no place to stand  
but the words I say

Lancelot and Guinevere  
are all about not being me

a bird calls I hear it distinctly  
what is a bird doing here

everything turns out to be  
a suburb of a lost city

deep below the riverbed I hear  
the lawnmowers of Atlantis

that time when I still had feelings  
and every touch was in the dialect of truth  
in that country where I truly lived  
there was no neutral thing no vague  
indeterminate perception  
and that is what Plato must have meant  
by the sunken island  
when everything that was fresh and new  
was inundated with the ordinary

but in my country we were scientists  
were profligate and bold  
we were as much animal as man  
sign of the centaur  
as much tree or rock as animal  
all the categories knew how to speak

can't you speak now  
aren't you saying everything you mean?

o meaning, meaning  
doesn't mean very much

back then the smallest piece of lead or chalk  
knew how to talk  
and more than that  
we knew how to listen

and there was no need for all this talk of meaning  
because we were with each other and with things  
and there was no distance

language is distance

isn't that the answer

why we talk three times a week

and never get any closer

any clearer never

close to where the goal's supposed to be

not ever close to one another

I call you doctor and you

call me hardly ever by my name

sometimes I think you forget it

because all of us are pretty much the same to you

the talking sofa and the listening chair

5 October 2002

I never send letters because the time of arrival

I mean when she gets the letter later

who knows what I'll be thinking

even e-mail is better since there's a chance

she'll be waiting at her monitor to receive me

right then when I need her I mean need to tell her

when I need her hear me

later I might mean different

and then it would a lie I told her

god I have to tell enough lies



without doing it by accident you know  
what I mean, are you a knower  
do you know  
how hard it is to say something  
and then put it back into writing  
because I know you'll think I'm crazy  
but I think everything we say  
everything we feel  
is just something we read inside us  
some screen never stops scrolling  
these words I'm telling you now  
I'm reading off the wall inside  
why don't we just leave them there inside  
not copy them out on pieces of paper  
clay whatever, isn't it bad enough  
to think in the first place  
that that's what people mean by thinking  
this recitation of what somebody writes inside you  
whoever made language up  
language is never me is never mine  
and they call this thinking, reading these  
words that never stop passing  
isn't it bad enough that we feel?

what about people who don't know how to read?  
that's a racist lie an elitist lie  
everybody knows how to read

everybody knows how to read the words I mean  
every tribe no matter how 'primitive'  
every person is reading all the time inside  
they don't all use our alphabet  
that semitic conspiracy  
maybe the letters were a big mistake  
to make us read those little marks  
instead of the glorious signs inside  
the real words we see of the world

that's very beautiful, how you say that,  
but let me ask you by your own terms  
what are you yourself reading or translating  
when you say what you've just been saying  
how does it connect you with the letters  
I mean the letters you don't write on paper  
to the women you don't want to tell lies to

you don't have to remind me  
I was listening while I was speaking  
I admit sometimes I'm not  
but now I was, language  
is so after the fact  
by the time you get around to listening  
even though that's your job  
no Freud never said it is the listening treatment it is the talking cure  
you do it I am the witness

the dumb monument to your discoveries  
well anyhow you listen  
and by the time the words get to you  
even though my lips are still  
wet with saying them  
licking them  
by that time I'm thinking something else  
and everything is full of lying

Do you change your meaning so often?  
I'm not talking about meaning  
meaning is a distraction from desire  
that's all I'm talking about, wanting  
the want that burns beneath the words  
those ashy letters that you leave  
language is the ash of desire

my enemies in the moon  
have done this, thrown down this tree  
so that it cracks my head open  
and lets my dreams spill out  
and you who stand there  
are of their party, you stand there  
and know nothing,  
you think it was just a ray of sunshine  
bright hot afternoon autumn light  
slicing through the trees that hit my head

I say it was a tree  
thrown down from heaven  
and the tree was on fire  
so that you just saw light  
you saw it cut across my face  
and you thought nothing  
but what pretty eyes I have  
when the light catches them  
just that way all amber  
you don't see the broken topaz  
smashed in my heart  
the dark blood fading as it dries  
my so-called eyes

for I have few friends on earth  
and none in heaven  
I have done battle with the princes of the air  
and now I pay the price  
but in my wrath is my reward

when you see anger  
you remember me

see how my dreams spill and soak the general ground  
already I've told you more than anyone  
do you think I'm coming to trust you  
is it your silence throws a switch in me

and I, like nature, abhor a vacuum  
and so hurry to fill it  
with the only thing I have to tell  
the truth of such as me  
that's why I'm talking so much today  
and also you looked tired when I came  
I thought I'd help you out today  
and do my share of telling  
and carry us, then you asked about the cut above my eyes  
where something fell and hit me  
and I knew my hour had come at last  
and all my challenges were finally answered  
and I was a marked man  
struck by a tree branch hurled from heaven  
specifically from the moon  
where the sneaking solar spirits of authority and revenge  
skulk at night and drench their weapons  
with the blood of dreams, the venom they distill  
from the saliva of sleeping women  
and with such elfshot arrowheads  
my brow is wounded doctor  
thank you for noticing  
my wound and no one does  
you know that mostly I'm invisible  
only my heart shows up on x-ray  
a lump of coral from the Philippines