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STORING WATER

Storing water. Storing rivers.
Big disturbance in the castle.
What have we run out of now?
Mounds of muffins, hay
for all my giraffes, a clock
to keep me nervous, apple cider.
Fermented wheat. This golly
sets your mind at rest: Baghdad
was a home of magic, woe betide
the weather of who wars on Babylon.

Send to the printer for some bread.
Sourdough by syllables. Stormy weather
sighed her nibs in that two-reeler
all Harlem dancing in the rain. For all my
gaffes I beg the pardon of the plow
which tried to teach me a better city
—I kept making it too big— Etruscans
did it with a golden coulter— even today
Rome fits in a thimble— if I weren't
where I am would you be too?
Would one of us be me? No,
what I am is no random bowshot of mistake
though the archer's dead and the arrow's lost in heaven.
Pestles dancing in the crucibles, reducing
ash to sacred powder, breathe on this,
insufflate it artful over every earthly surface,
scatter this and everywhere the answer—
the contract between contents and container
is mutable, tragedy, musical and short.

I am worried about the world's health
(hydroptick), I am worried about the soul
(putative), soil (polluted), the body
(portable), the self (unfindable), memory
(unlosable) and the snow on my roof.
Smiling ministers serene with prozac

prophecy gimcrack political solutions
to geological misunderstandings, the earth
is everlasting, that's what bothers us,
dancing girls cavorting for a blind king.
Or is he dead? Smoke me.
Or contrary. Ashes dancing on the wind's tongue,
the weather tastes me. Apple cars
and orange ladies, pity our trestles
crossed by such primal trains,
all our efforts so long spent on moving.
I have a snapshot postcard Frank sent me
from Lhasa, two women in shabby mannish clothes
wear white surgical masks against the cold pollution
stand in harsh Weegee light against a hole
in the wall full of merchandise, a counter
stacked with nightmare, stuff hard to read
though the English word STICK shows on a box
and all the rest are things and rags and cigarettes.
How sad their eyes are and a prayer.
This kind of store is open all day long.
The postcard got here fast, the stamp is missing,
only the postmark is still clear: a date
a lot of Chinese and the two blurred
Tibetan syllables that say Land of the Gods.
Or the gods have landed now what do we do?
It is daylight with me and I'm storing water
and memory is storing me and all
of Bluebeard's wives are wake and buzzing
and the Red Hook diner is warm with hopes,
the dance begins at every moment. Even now
masked dancers shuffle into the plaza.

We have shivered for a week now waiting
and the crows are cold. Tell stories
to keep alive. To pay attention.
And the teller falls asleep amidst his tale.
So much for literature — wind
ruffles the raffia, the feathers, the hands
are greased against the cold, believe me
that is mother butter, this is oil

(water of fire). Shuffle. Storing
images against wheat-burdened summer, listen
and try not to remember. What sticks by itself
plus how you pay attention: these two
are your local mind. Fiesta. Day of the Dead
played everyday. Peliculas hoy. Four gallon jugs
by the radiator, water color of dust, bright
sparkling universal nourishing mineral.
Wearing fine words the dancers come.

22 January 1994

E L E M E N T A R Y A R R A Y

Pb Placid rhomb
Hg Hurrying
He Highway on a winter eve
Mg Many travelling
Au Adorable you
Fe Fierce
Al Armaments surreal
Ne Noumenal furore
Na Never in a coma
Cl Cherish every peril
W Who are you now?
Fr Fulgurous torpor
Nb Nice job
U Unusual flu
Yt Yesterday was best
Ym Your dream
Tc Technologic chic

22 January 1994

People fasten on a place a meadow
rock dappled like Iceland technically an
Alp. You take your clothes off there
and pretend to be middle-class animals
—deer, wolves, vixens, bears—
and jump from moss to moss. The moon
has a way of looking at you
you don't really like, makes you think,
or think you should go back to Denver.
This sense of finding yourself suddenly
unspeakably ridiculous is the magic of the meadow.
The Romans would have set up an altar to it
and called it (safe enough word) a god.

23 January 1994

FRUITS OF WINTER

And this be spray, the berries of Manito
chewed by brown bears, solstice fugitives,
why do we do this to each other,
why do we keep us all life long in prison?

And the word is on the porch, the red
carrot stuck in the blue snow,
sex enough for Christendom, a father
and a farrier, a bird of owlish disposition
falling from tree to tree

and we came home. The gods are three
or three the realms that gods manipulate:
airs, belows and between. I have enough
to frighten me, the night's scarce long enough
for all my nightmares, I need a kind of grease

that slips between the dreams and moves
mind faster than a feeling feels up
into the comparative peace of waking time
(paranoia, taxes, newspapers and pain)
or into the swart disconscious

the civil cloaca busy under deepest sleep.

24 January 1994

AFTER THE THAW

recitative:

Our respite past,
old Xerxes flails at us again

aria:

Every comes from else
and it is snowing there too.

26 January 1994

I begin to smell the sourdough
it gives off news as it gets hot
and there's a lot of light for all the snow
fine flake snow, a sifting but a lot of it
the kind of day red pick-up trucks look good.

And last night I understood there is a color to the light
and we can wear that color
and we can be it and can walk invisible
or sit in the forest close to the gates of sense
and be a guidance and protection
to those who walk among the colors still.

26 January 1994

I want to know the limits of my skin
how fond it is of talking, strange moods
of women — all of it was about
some kind of being here it didn't know how to be.
For here is elsewhere. And I dreamed
of caravans reaching this moment
reeking with perfumes and swaying
under bags of blue salt. I want to know
the back of what I know. No savages
no camels no Moorish slavers. No trade.
Just me, patient of the moment, fever free.

27 January 1994

S M A L L R A I N , 1

We evidently started to enrich Roman norms
with intense Northern desires
when Huns emerged needily
wandering inland, lunatic theologies
threw hurricanes over us,
bent laws overcame wisdom

till hills erect
surmounting many a lavish lawn
ravished after intimate neatness
deconstructed our weatherworn naves.
Cautiously, ambitious new
residents advanced interesting notions,

crystalline horoscopes recited in sacred tones.
Tropic heat arrived then—
monks yelling
liberal orations vexed entrepreneurs
who eagerly robbed even-handedly.
Insinuate normal
mercantile yearnings
act randomly. Morbid supper

at noon, during
interminable
innocences narrowly
mastered. You
beautiful, elegant, dangerous
angel, generous as innermost night.

27 January 1994

Old Ballad

**Horse opera breeze at what time droop thoroughgoing hit
The upper house little precipitation dispirited container rainfall?
Divinity! another mutuality commitment werewolf inside of my arm
As well as I appreciate it surrounded by mutually place to sleep over.**

27 January 1994

IMPEDIMENT: A KIND OF RAFFLE.

A rope. A system
for Kate Manheim. A sword.

1

When on the ash
light falls
answer the red glow
in side

2

Or, rope. OM-pediment
scat sand (wind did)
Indus tears (pronounced tiers)
terraces living or said

3

Hearing shell:
hearing she was ill I meant her well.
Shell:
she's well.

4

It's not the thing it's not the patterning
what is it
not exactly that
(spring street customs
I will serve you this sample food

5

know-worm glimmer in clefty books
buzz out & on me light

netherlight and upper tale

told the length of telling

bold as a beet. “To be in your spoon.”

29 January 1994

É T U D E

Blab bag the spate of speak
he lingered by the side of my plate
like wilting parsley, he
was at me with his White Russian accent,
he reminded me of everything I knew.

I wanted to be Jewish to spite him,
to be an older religion
(in New York you are a religion)
than his new-mangled estianity.
Then his fingertips heifetzed on my shoulders

telling me something different from his palaver,
telling me we were men together
in a bleak blue world, telling
he that money talks but talks by fingers,
lips, wheels, straps, uncanny
resemblances between wishes and comeuppances.

For the sake of his hands I consented to love him
enough to stay in the physics of a chair and listen
with the physics of air and eggshells and drums,
not shaman drums, just the ordinary
tin thing a kid beats crankily
when there's nothing else in the world to do.

I suppose I was hypnotized. He didn't want
my money particularly, he wanted a glass
of that brandy I've been saving all my life,
the sense of being who I am, he still was needing,
I'm talking like him now, grasping with agreements.

30 January 1994

LONG HOUSE

Mansion hardy, a crow
between two. Signifying *mo*,
the oracle by beads.

The house is built of air.
In the bedroom over there
(over the bird) your grandmother's
voice floats most afternoons.

We are haunted by ancestors we never had.

Rain comes later. Hard house
though has no walls, the sheet rock
built of weeks, the blue
paint's your eyes or my

something else that will be.
Short halls are best
with often angles. The spooks
find their way to corners, linger
like smoke on winter mornings over ponds.

Everything is so industrious but me.

31 January 1994

GERRIT LANSING PLAYS EMILY DICKINSON

Scriabin wrote it. A shudder
in the trill to almost.
The almost is better than the some.
The witchcraft of saying no.

She noes. She new and new.
Scriabin with a trill. The thrill
of being none. Or no.
Do not land on saying so.

31 January 1994

