

12-1994

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Recommended Citation

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Late to milking this cow comes
hair streaming down the sky the sister of it hurries
star fall and cold weather.
Old men keep fingering the threads.

12 December 1994

Well then it has to be at the end of light
when the owl's out and no man sees him
and the woman knows the sky bone
and no man understands

so white it is,
"scarce visible, as an Apparition
might itself portend a vaster Personage
more solid than itself, yet powerful,"

shadow of a hand.
It has to be the hour of the end,
half tea half coffee, the milk poured
till it overflows and cascades down your lap,
perils of dining, the waitress
whirls away in a cloud, God decides
to take the Earth back,

you're left with bread,
spoons, wet clothes, a calendar,
a parking lot beneath an inch of pretty snow—
all silent things, the perils
of having language to confess in
or profess your love or swear a vow,

the terror and significance of vows,
Pound's old Man Standing By His Word
that still has no kept us out of war.
Wise as a man is, he wants what is not his—
and that's the end of wisdom and

crackle of fallen
twigs underfoot in the dark.

Who goes there?

Who is present when I come?

Broken branches, seal of heaven
stamped on an exhausted earth.
The men with blow-dried hair will rule us now
by rote and Santa Claus and bible.

Yet a day will come when I'll ask you
this question again. You will be free
to answer. Or anything you do or don't
will answer it.

That is what it means to be free.
That is what a free man is.

13 December 1994

And now the finches are all back
their purple bosoms snug against the feed
our seed. Strange interactions in this little land,
dreams of colonists and every loudmouth
an emperor-to-be. A strange time on this planet
and only the birds seem at home — probably
because they spend their lives above it, scouts,
always looking for the real way out.

14 December 1994

STEEPLETOP

As if the paltriness of an exalted crucifix
pinned on the sky over your bridge your house your parking lot
struck you for its bloodlessness, you wanted Man
up there in the bleeding clouds of you hope it is just sunset and

how can they wear that round their necks, the proud
lucifers of organized devotion
who tell you who you are and what to do
and lift their pink cathedrals also

over the bleak winter Paris happenstance you remember
from even before you went there o you were young
but everybody was and the buildings had their dark scars intact
from Revolution, insurrection, war, war

and all you wanted was a Friend, a Friend in high places,
a comma in the endless sentence of the world
when you could take a breath and have a drink
and let the air fill up your lungs again

quietly like a country after losing one more war
and what is more you think inside your breast
another Sacred Heart is beating and you feel the flames
that twist around the thorny business all hearts feel

the torture of being in a dying world
and no way to save the ones you love not even one
and so you guess the mind again, the red one you admire so
that fills with emptiness and seems to breathe

quiet over the god of love and those who murder him.

14 December 1994, Hopson

FREE

As I was walking home along the dark
I heard a dog bark inside a tree
and then the cars began to slip beside
man and sound or road and man

till all there was was walking and I knew
nothing but my cold hand carrying
and my warm hand in my pocket
and the dog was the wind now and nobody knew.

But body knew and body knows and walk
was walking me home in the dark.
I saw the pale of my house at the foot of the hill
and there was nothing but night and knowing
and so much to be known and none of it by me.

15 December 1994

ORE

Catch another one — a “glimpse”
of someone hurrying down the hall — who? —
the last sight of someone you once loved —
o all the lovely names — tame the proud and lift
the humbled — spare the bronze your metaphors —
cold hands write hard — mountains of Serbia —
I cannot take sides — except against my memory

(space) remorse was the first name of this star.

16 December 1994

Mesmerized by possibility
(long passes never touching the skin
continuing close above the contour you are
like snow flakes passing a window never kissing)

that what is thinkable — she — is not
touchable except at the cost — terrible —
sensation — applause all through the Velvet
Theater — cost of life — the fact — this
is now all there is left of that

— this is fact this is what she actually answers,
this is tied together by everything will happen now
— the mercer spins fine sturdy thread — the cost
of actual — is terrible — the consequences
start just past the edge of dream — nervous,
the rhetoric of embarrassment begins many a dreary war
— means blood soaked, tu sais, the adjectives, the losses —
in what rash hour — any human interaction is
Eden lost and nightmare falcon — stop —
among the possibles — do not be fire — Texas
burning between the great dry river and the desert snows.

17 December 1994

The road's OK and something's melting — dirt thing come
by spreading backwards — orange truck — civilian
colors — no beeper on that backwards for a wonder!
Exclamation — I saw a star inside my sleep —
it was candescent with desire as a rock in midair
for earth-fall — for Hurrying the End — kabbalah
taught it — cooperant evil to use up the devil's world —
leave nothing but the ash of it but in the crumb of that
the living spark perdures — can Céline be saved —
can the city function once again — be holy —
abstain from charity in a blaze of Love?

Grace by far

is a surrogate surgeon — I saw this star,
it slept me — and in my seem I thought and in my thinking
I released them from my hold — all of them,
waits and wants, women and wonders — and from
wanting I turned to being — gladly, hand over hand
up the rope of the minute — fell to be now —
woke and something melted — a small snow
had stalked our house — and she was sleeping.

17 December 1994