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In the glass of the table top
I see a bird fly through bare trees

Is this enough for you?
Probably a finch. Definitely
the table I crawled on when I was two
beside the big blue Chinese blue and white vase
filled with hydrangea blossoms
to watch the church burn down
dew from the flowers falling on my arm

is this enough? Biber's
Finding of the child Jesus teaching in the Temple
which starts with every human loss

is it enough to be human, to lose?
Things stay, birds go, a child is born,
lost, found, loved, betrayed,
talked about and slain. Is this enough?

To do one's work. To rise.
(A violin remembering a rose.)

13 December 1993

So there are some songs here
to respect the cold air of December
climbing through my neck
to reach that *overheated vocabulary*
the odd critic complains of
while he lights his penny candle
in the plastic cup in the church of Saint Simplex
itself a cold stone hall not a
leper or a paralytic within miles.

13 December 1993

In the kingdom of the wise
the fool has certain privileges.
It is these of which the present song
sings in your presence,
lovely body of the world
neither wise nor foolish.

*One is the moon and one is the sun
and one is the neighbor next door,
one is the apple and one is the grape
and one is the woman who taught you to speak.*

These are the middle people
and no one knows anything higher.
And no one knows anything low.

13 December 1993
Song of the Circumstances

So there are some songs here
somebody else is supposed to sing—
I have forgotten all the measures and
only have a snapshot to remember,

coming towards the empty offices at night
with a simple glass of water, aye,
that will cure “business,” that thing
took your father away every day,

or walking up the street with bad friends
(how naked it is to be with anyone)
and let the busses run past you
and never get on and never come back.

13 December 1993

Balsam
of the day
the last vast moony sperm
densed into after-midnight
speaking, a two
o'clock dance where
the rocks move & far
down in water she is coming,

the one we mean,
our faces pressed
soon to her breast,
the answerer.

14 December 1993

Hike there.
Stand on the stone
bridge. Touch the stone.
The bridge itself
is broken
long ago. This
holds you.
It started here,
this business
of being in the air
and looking down.
White water
in a world of its own.
You wonder
is it worth your life
to go there
or to stay away?
The stone holds you
in the middle.
This is the air.
We live here.
Somewhen I touch
you we turn away.

14 December 1993

M Y S T E S

Alternation of a curious apart—
Come here, star-scum, fall
on my out
stretched tongue-tip
offering to know
(know by mucus how you music us).

15 December 1993

On the second day of the eleventh moon:
heel slip in soft
wet mud-under-the-grass
on the way to the big house
walking fast.
Gypsy on the headland
over the river. *Over the river &
where are we now?*

15 December 1993

The nerves have it
the little airman who fell out of the sky
on the way to that nice Canadian's lap
a love story has to have heaven in it
hell and relatives, has to have color
and rain on the roof, wind in the lodgepole pines.
Once in the mountains I heard her speak
her hair swept down bridalveil she cries
"by the sluiceway of the reservoir" cries
a white thing on the branch of a maple
here to me into shadows, winter! The story
has to have water boiling on no stove,
the quiet old woman your beloved will become,
yourself in the form of a mirror
staggering all day long along the wall
turned all the way into light.

16 December 1993

Skies are more frequent than we think.
What is the custom of this house will help you—
the gods nearby understand it, they'll help you too,
and the birds are used to it, whatever you do
all the time, that's what truth is. Heaven is here.
Learn what your doorstep is trying to tell you.

16 December 1993

THE THIEF

Dreamt a well-dressed woman had stolen the porch
put everything —columns and all— in big black plastic bags.
All but the screens, she'd rolled up and wedged against
a tree that isn't there. She left the roof.
It stayed up by itself over the airy spaciousness of what was left.
I chased through dark bushes in the direction
opposite the one in which she fled. The thief
and the bethieved have nothing to say to each other.
She is clothed and I am naked. It is cold
out here, I count on numb fingers the few
things I still have left to steal.

16 December 1993

Edge of apparency
where the words wait
margins of the wood
the beasts tread

She straddled the pole
to light the Fix Star
& down below
we heard whatever we wanted to hear—

language belongs to the hearer
as our bodies belong to our beholders

& there is nowhere to hide.
“Don't look at me
with the eyes of the town in your eyes”

17 December 1993

Smitten by the perfection of how things just are—
Leave them be.
Change me.

17 December 1993

YULE OR ELSE

Remains?
Maybe not?
The animal
is at
(where else?)
the door.
And Santa Claus
(Sint Klaas) is
not as fat
as he used to be.
Reasons galore.
Something
is ending.
In another week
it will lie on the hearth
burning to nothing
and looking good.
He comes to town
with a blackamoor.
They get off the trolley
and people swoon.
Where have I seen
the like before?
A beggarman
at every door.

18 December 1993
Boston

PASSING THROUGH BROCKTON

I haven't always known my left foot is longer than my right—
a whole size so, and when did I learn it?
Did one keep growing or did one shrink?
I want to know and I want to know now,
when did it happen and when did I notice?
Am I not the president of my feet, lord
of these few bones and muscles big as they are?
When did they grow and when did I know it?
And what else don't I know, and when will I learn it?
And all of a sudden I am the poem Clayton always was writing
about how one comes out of Indiana with flesh on one's feet
and wood in one's head and it takes twenty years of hard
work over poetry to make the head as soft and sturdy as the feet
and in between a wasteland of desires gradually
(and with such pain, such rain, such remainders)
bursts with the help of so few of them, friends, into flower.

18 December 1993
Brockton & after

And the opoponax is it as fragrant
in the dry scary windows of dusty latino *botanicas*,
storefronts in Brooklyn?
You burn incenses before the saints
you think you know by name
and wish for this and that,
they hear you with their ears of water
and then love happens,
doesn't love just happen?
They hear you with the hearts of cornmeal and coffeegrounds
and you know she's the right one when she comes
because her hands smell of the same incense
and her neck is dusty and her eyes the quiet eyes of plaster statues.

18 December 1993
Boston

Too many to
be at peace

I have spoken too
much of the silences

where loves are born
in the leaf shadows of imperfect attention

for when desire is perfect
it becomes its object

there is no separation.
But in these leaves

some otherwise turns,
it all is light and dark,

too much language
in too much silence

I can not see to want.

19 December 1993
Boston

No luck to batter the heart's
locked door, we won a prize for being
closed, not a peep of tawny light
from under the air raid curtains
we were inside the busy silence of
a private house inside a war.
And maybe are. Still the parking lot.
Pink tights in the parking lot.
The girl on the stairs. Everything
was waving good bye. I lick
my hand and taste her skin.

19 December 1993
Boston