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And I can't begin, can't do
anything with the ladders, o grace
at last it's raining, and

where do ladders go? Glass.
What does glass see?
Someone I don't want to be.

And the leaves along the way.
Thorns of the catechism tree
— I am berry, you baptize me —

and the rain-song fills me with despair.
A hammer, what is a hammer?
Or a hook? In the hamlet

a bachelor grieves for all his wives
— the crucifix is humming on the wall —
and my night is on me.

11 July 1995

Suddenly I don't have two months left. Have less.
Deux mois. Two me's waiting for one train.
The train's time, her seats are free,
the destination writ in smoke above the engine
soon disperses in the summer haze. But we read fast,

we knew the answer. Suddenly the summer is utterly come.

12 July 1995

TRUTH

truth is nowhere a man in a boat could get to it,
mud flats of Malden —it doesn't have to rain —
this instrument so oft displayed the Wind
inside the shutters the breath of mind —

and we have waited for her courses
like a sword for morning. Over the fire we offered
and not to tell. A virtue like water.
Something wrong with this cactus, is it syntax?

Do we need for segue for our ease,
or is one thing (as I assert) the same as another
and our thought is gapped succession only,
and logic just superstition, an insidious

music that tries to cover up the interlude.

12 July 1995

PAS DE FEUX

So here I have hidden myself
inside a bad body, in a bad name,
and it's taken me half a century to find me.

13 July 1995

for Electra

To get married is to take a horn
and blow it. The whole
neighborhood hears.
The woman drawing water from the well
is startled by the huge sound
and spills it all into her apron.

To get married to to string a bow
and draw it, arrowless and free
and let it snap, to hear the twang
of it louder than sunshine.
The steeplejack hears the sound and falls,
is saved by his rope, swings back and forth
in front of the bell tower
like the hands of a clock gone mad.

To get married is to find a meadow and mow it.
Rabbits and hedgehogs run away, partridges
rumble up into the relativity. Snakes
hide in the furrows below the blade.
Around and around the mower trudges,
drunker at every pass, belting red whiskey
from a canteen slung from his waist
till it's empty and he passes out along the smooth grass
and dreams about a blue ship with green sails
sailing away on a bright ocean, he's on it,
you're on it, everybody's in white, he's far
from anything he ever knew, a coast
like Africa's in front of him, hurry,

run away with your love before he wakes up.

13 July 1995

A WOMAN WE ALL KNOW THOUGH NOT WELL

If she could pick her own pocket what would she find?
Not the twine and rubber bands and knife in mine.

She'd find some darkness and loop it round her neck.
She'd find a snapshot of herself she's never seen

then study it and study it. She'd find a little bell,
the kind a cat would wear but she's no animal.

We hear it ringing feebly in her hand.

But all the while she's groping and we're watching,
someone is thinking — a thought

begins in her hand and travels shape-shifting
up the somber canals of her forearm

to the metropolis above where switches
crackle, flags flap in a strong sea breeze

and she suddenly knows: There is nothing
where I thought was something.

I study just pictures and they fall from me.

14 July 1995

THE FACES

Lined up at the check-out for our inspection
like all the other commodities: faces, all the faces
of who we think we are or choose to be.
Purchase is our act of faith. No one knows
the secret identity of the other, even the other
who stands beside me checking magazines.
I am Claudia. You are Sylvester. We are Kennedy.

14 July 1995

THE SECOND OPINION

Since your call I have been working with you
on the obsidian half of my head. Dark, hard,
sharp fracturing, almost opaque. But not.
Your case is interesting in a tribal sense,
how much God can you lose and still live?
A fleck of me is under your right thigh
where even at this distance you can feel me
thinking, not near anywhere in particular,
just hot thinking. Feel me with your finger:
your body is the same as mine. We are identical
and from the same afar. The operation
depends on grace, intelligence, flow of traffic,
a bird perched on my attention now pecks
at your simple skin. Live by thinking alone.

15 July 1995

Περσεφωνη

It happens to every woman
she finds herself enthroned beside some man
even the unlikeliest

They are examining flowers, roots, grains,
fruits. They evaluate. They look
into the remotenesses

where things repeat themselves into a world
thereby made. They sit
in anxious peace almost believing.

15 July 1995

I felt at once the actual lunar passion
beneath our common greeting—
as underneath the daylit busybody earth
a blue pearl moon is working.

Suddenly our eyes were singular.
It was the moment books prepare
when the glance of power knew us,
scream of a hawk from the tip of a tower.

15 July 1995

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Mind now is a vagrant suitor
and a saint. In the twin
lands of exile (America, Australia)
mind comes to its own

unlulled by civil polity and island grace.
In Barbaria it is known
because alone. Unconflated
with its products or its history,

just mind, bleaked out, unfated, free.

16 July 1995

A digression on passion. A moon
in the house. A glass.
No need no more.

Highway
in moonlight. Nobody coming.
Far dog barks off. Summer.
No more to know.

Alone
with the unknowable.
Outside inside so little difference—
less than between a voice and silence.

Imagine a road that tells the truth!

16 July 1995

PROSODY

Count all my syllables.
Turn them into money.
I am a Mediterranean
man set to dance
between a horn and a hoof,
given time to eat
and shadows to drink.

16 July 1995

THE QUERN

Examine the quern as guide—
the way a god decides
to offer his best wishes to a fugitive
as a pretty emblem of
the necessary Dying that comes after,
grief after grief.

Examine the grain
ground in it by women working,
always women, men are too grand
and frightened to behold
the consequence of human labor,

the lay of our land or karma,
so men watch a woman work.
How happy they are, examining the soft
jiggle of her breasts and hips.
How soon they die. And it is all
happening in the quern.

Grind,
grind the past into the perishable present,
the hands' palms squeeze engulfs the stone,
pestle, pizzle, we are all
born from this grinding, born, born black
and blue from churning.

Silhouette
of a madwoman over the bobbing
ice cubes in a glas of water is it,
weak tea, dilute Glenlivet, brine
from an old Martian ocean trapped
in the Hypothalamic 3-D Xerox
and poured out here. Madonna
of nonchalance, flesh of our maybe.

Woodstock, 17 July 1995

Any given word is just a Wonder
offered, oral, a Grail Dinner
spread out on your brass plate.

Wink my eye, crack my knuckles,
I patrol your street.

O superquestion for whom all our answers, all
our individual answers are neither
adequate nor interesting,

all right, be irrelevant.
I know where you live
or the little path that sneaks
behind where the hill-ponies are kept

into the old lower town
and the dogs are barking everywhere
but all their impulsive effrontery

won't keep me from going down.

Woodstock, 17 July 1995

On the utility of pretense, a power pole
bringing unknown energy
into your house. Subdue your fever,
we are near the barrier.

Women work as linemen now,
and I delight to think of one
perched on her pole, earphones on,
listening to my phone conversation,

she hears everything I say! It is art,
I communicate without the least effort
and express myself fully
without any sense of a self,

she sits in the sky and hears everything I say,
unknown audience, the muse who is sheer
listening, she lives where the rain comes from,
we forget ourselves and both are free.

18 July 1995

MORMELING

Mormeling, like a Baltic marmot
burrowing in sea foam — the evanescent
is eternity enough for me, o ting
ting of little bells, o shadows of lovers

brief on hair-swept sand. Walt wet
into free futures this now unpacks
you think. Mormeling: the sound a soul
makes in chest, throat, nose, before

anything is spoken or barked. A hum
before habit, just being alive.
Maybe a kind of warning that I'm me.
Maybe a reindeer stumbles in with ice in his horns.

18 July 1995

THE SPIN

The dark things
turn bright enough
to see the wind
coming.

Maybe fear
is an adequate
encyclopaedia
and there are children
listening.

They pay
attention to everything,
we sell them the world
they have to inhabit.

Center of a ring of oaks
heartwood of one
—oldest— of them
sympathy is nucleus

there is a hope I mean
in weather that we don't
allow in any other
simplicity.

The naivety
of heat! The brash
callowness of cold, the sex
of rain. Even so,

even though we know
nothing, have only
opinions, we use them
for what they're worth

and the thing

tries to answer me
like a woodchuck sleeping.
Your character

is my fate.
That is the difference
after two
thousand years

the grief called romance
in the dark called time.
A child carries
a pinwheel

through the zoo,
the child runs,
the running makes
the pinwheel spin.

We are the only
wind there is.

18 July 1995

Taste the touch of an eye looking
and you'll hear what I mean.
All senses fuse. We are poured
together in the year of the world,
this mute goddess holds one firm.

Sin street, a flute of information,
sin flute, the spell you spill me,
shadows sink into grass like rain and are swallowed.

19 July 1995

Kelly

Can't quite get the shape of your shell —
is it is? In it thin? Does it turn
down into the dark or screw pink
nacre up into eyezone? Nautiloid?
Ammonitish? Are you a kind
of fluent rock, a hidey-hole that swims,
are you Twins? An inward and an out,
forked path and corkscrew turn?
Here I am, wearing strange shoes
from some Asian country where colors
have a different meaning, cowrie and aren't,
aren't all pink and brown like us,
there is a measure to their foolishness
called song. The million verses
of the Manas epic among the Kyrgyz people
(that would be forty volumes of our kind,
each 500 pages long) come to console me
for my spendthrift verse. His name
means *Mind* in our languages, who knows
what a man means in his own house
though, a hero, a heap of stones. Cairn,
are you a shell of air? Cloud, clam,
claim, clone, clear — the socket of reality
fits many a prong. We came, and come again
—that is our certainty. But the shell
will never tell. It is a ribbon tightmost curled,
a Christmas tree from Mars, a worm in marble,
a smoke-signal frozen to the sky sent up
from some banshee tribe a little civiller
than my own, a curl of eyebrow
on an absent face, a grace. As any object is,
allow me to caress your particulars,
the mystery so long asleep beneath your sheets.

20 July 1995

