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What we see in winter is a forgetting

Too many bones remember

The puddles filled with too many skies

1 April 1993

The soft of rain the Sawkill
is a river these days
elements wait for us
the way the day hides in the dark

on verra and then again we won't
a long time or ever
till the caves open at last
and all the images come walking out.

1 April 1993

GRAPHOLOGY

for Charlotte

These turns of hand tell all

the script
that's hidden in the scrivener
setting down patiently all the torts of Being.

Lights on, road full of potholes.
Read me in the dark.

1 April 1993

THE THEORY

for Charlotte

The tar top porch roof looks like wet leather.
Along the sheet metal fore edge
a channel of water runs
that shows the sky
if you look.
These few inches contain the whole story.
Or if anywhere, it is here.

1 April 1993

THE CENOPHONIC

listening to another language
until it isn't language at all
I'm hearing

it is the other way, the noise of the dance of it,
the life of it, goes
by the stream of it,

the sound of nothing making sense
out of my hands

1 April 1993

in the classroom

listening to the teacher
teaching the language students
talking carefully back

I notice my eyes keep wandering
from the full human skeleton
dangling in the corner

(full-chested, a person
from the high mountains maybe,
shabby old bones now

against the cobalt sky)
to the periodic table above the blackboard
the double framework of our lives,

the bones. The bones.

1 April 1993

What I was waiting for on the corner or maybe
what the corner was waiting for under my feet

(the latter, the valley, the Welsh
letters strewn around the tree on the border,
a man with an owl over his head and him not knowing,
a kid with a scythe and remembering —suddenly
and in great fear but soon forgetting— what it was to be old.

Things come to me. I told you that once, Madeleine,
your mouth gently open
to parse my surprise
into the functions of ordinary life,

that people touch one another
but you don't touch me
though you want to,

it all is about birds, about touching. "The Book
of the Cannibal," fallen from the little inlaid stand,
rests on the red carpet. I am your leaf,
it said. I am the country the maid had in mind
when she held you in the soft furrow of her lap
and looked down into your round pale eyes
and spoke a different language. All your life
you've been trying to understand.

2 April 1993

THE FACT OF SPRING

for Charlotte

1.

The things that are closer than that
wait under the hedge and hide
themselves as the reflection
you see floating (but where is it
really?) on the water's face
that looks up from the furrow,
from the drowned lawn. April.

It understands us. It looks the way we do,
always beginning, always wet,
shivering with hope.

2.

The water says when you look at it casually:
The sky. Up there. The cloud.
But when you study it closely
it says: Your eye. Yourself
looking at me. This scrutiny
you and your kind will always
confuse with love but it's just looking.
Never does water say: It's me.

3 April 1993

I keep thinking about Martin Luther King
lying wounded to death on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel.
A dark man, someone we never understood.
The energy inside the words, voice,
inside his not-doing. The burr of silence
that made his speech so strong. His knees
are bent up he lies flat on his back
his hands to his face. People stand looking at him
helpless in their vitality. We never understood
how much he knew, how much you have to know
to keep silent and make things happen. Things change.
But the change isn't the point. Nothing
really happened. The witness mattered.
To say it, against the violence and the oppressor
and the rage of the oppressed, against every
evil or opportunistic thing, to speak
and know you have to die for saying so.
This is true, but I don't understand why it is so.

3 April 1993

LENT. TO HOLD IN THE HAND.

Thing near, an iron rod.
Or heart. The men of Somerset
and the women of the sea. Nothing
is lower than me.

Here I can feel the earth-heat
already answering. Here is spring
coaxing the daffodils from under,
her flower, palest

yellow, that she sees as blue.
Always these answers, never
a silence, this tissue
of interferences the world.

4 April 1993

The thrive matter,
the filled-up church.
Here are the people —empty
palm of my hand
where the Buddha stands,
shown —when I bother to look—
by the light
in daytime and the dark at night.

We have come into the world
mostly in strong
bodies mostly in grace,

there is thriving
where we are,
towards and towards.

Here is one more word
that loves you and has no meaning.

4 April 1993

for Charlotte

Here is laundry.
Your nice clothes.
Signs we make
to each other — Come
we walk in country
amity among the woods.

The light is old now,
we can hardly see
to touch each other.
In this skin we write down
all the dreams we have.

4 April 1993

I think of my parents—
they lived experimentally
always seeming
to begin, never knowing
how. They touched, felt,
fed, begat, strove, expired—
all in wonderment, all
as if strangers to this place
forever. No one taught them.
Fatherless, motherless,
they were found. Only in silence
did they feel at home.

I hurried to be what they were not,
a denizen, a man known
to the place, my name spoken.
Only now, years later,
do I understand their bravery,
the heat of the day
they bore. From what planet
had they fallen, royal
personages stranded
from some opaque machine?

4 April 1993

By mannered Welsh a leaf is feeling

A poem staggered by the spring.

Sunset the river fibrillates with light.

5 April 1993

LITERATURE

I am tired of not being here. A loop of prose
around a tender feeling. Letters
are a Swiss republic, always the snowy mountains
lift through the yellow haze but you die if you go there
naked, gasping, ardent in the overdetermined light.

5 April 1993

The esters of it
the names
borrowed from an ancient chemistry

to touch you
inside
there is nothing but flavor

the intelligence
of the skin
reaching all our proper ends

endings storms spirits needs. Our sanities.

5 April 1993

THE DARK ALPHABET

[begins:]

And now what was is.
A tremor of Corinthian columns
a marketplace empty of olives.

Bards sit on crumbling stones.
Birds invent classical languages
before anybody else is awake to speak.

Catching up? You'll never catch the dawn,
crows, the words your dream meant
clear as you could be then you forgot it,

destiny of all spoken things.
Dear Diary, I am a copper coin I am starved for love
decent men have all died now.

Egypt was my first love wet and black,
elegant intercourse symbolized by chastening lines
engraved on stone we brought so far.

Far heavy burdens like a leather sack of coins
feigning legitimate occasions we carry body with us,
foreigners though we are to this savage motherland.

Gravity is queen here, who in her equipollent hips
guards the lusters of eternity and the rust of now,
giving us bones and stones and all the weight of age.

[continues...]
6 April 1993

Among the lost a few things found—
a Chinese fountain pen, a pelican
at the lagoon outside Bolinas,
tea from the Iron Dragon Well too strong to drink

(steeped too long, good though to have its name
for a certain kind of fierce love experience,

the Woman at the Well, to whom I first
made known my nature, if not my mission.

The manifest. These red flowers
I keep thinking have some meaning.

7 April 1993

IN SEAS THE THING IS FOUND

Dolphin landing
for one quick eternity
lifted in the air

in sunlight held
and then knives down
into where the Empires begin

and here where the old
seven-sided 50 new pence coin
—Britannia surveying Emptiness

or her empty house
o lost religion
of other people!—

huddles on the guest room desk
in the last lent light.
This coin buys nothing.

Come, let us wash our hands
in all this meager light
and send our little message to the world.

7 April 1993

TO PARSIFAL

The woman at the well
turns out to be the water in the well
the lifted

the one that heals you. You are tired
of being right, of not knowing what day it is
the meadows fill up so with flowers,
and being right because you know nothing,
and can answer every question that men ask
with the same shapely silence. And women,
you know how to answer them too
with a remarkable departure. An absence
shaped like the shadow of a wild goose on the snow

passing and passing and turning into
a sound you think you hear on the other side of the woods.
Far cry. The water in the well
turns out to be your face, drinking it.
She is your need for the world.
Though she looks younger than you by far
she knew your mother before you were born.

Water is like that, her hair all over your knees.

7 April 1993

