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The wait is over
the conditions
we call normal
have returned.
The fish is in the stream,
child in schoolbus,
feet in pain. Society.

But it is summer,
the bus is empty
and I have taken off my shoes.
Daylight. The fish
safe in his own mystery
as much as anyone can be.
The flow. Now
the garbage truck
grouches by, the internet
is back, the sky grey.
But in my dream it had snowed just as I said it would to the doubters around me, and mushy icy inches of it covered the ground. And my own notebook, blue, No.434, had skittered from somewhere and lodged between the two front wheels of a car, our own car! someone has to get belly-down to retrieve it, and it hasn’t happened yet. Where do they get such ideas?

1 July 2021
When I was a child
We had at least
the illusion of free will--
we would go
to school, walk there
on our own feet, linger
along the way, as if
school were just as real
as the drug store or the pool hall
or the flower on the bush
or the cat asleep on the stoop.
But now kids are carted off
in yellow prison vans, no choice
but making noise, no hope—
but far down the afternoon
they might be dragged home.

1 July 2021
These trees will make a catholic of me yet, a universal animal, they shake their holy water on me after rain, lift my eyes to heaven just to watch their leaves print their tidings on the sky.

1 July 2021
Be quiet in me, comrade,
we’ve been through enough already, don’t need commentary,
the names of the years,
Burbank, Fresno, Valencia,
Delhi, Dubai. Forget it,
the road is sacred and empty,
no nanes, please, we’re all ancient teenagers shuffling along..

1 July 2021
IN RHINEBECK

Rain. The witches are out walking in their pointed hoods enjoying the weather. They linger along the sidewalks, their fingers trailing along the new brick walls between the elegant shopfronts. Witches love brick, their fingers read the creases the valleys and ridges of hard clay, each crease a letter in their own strange alphabet. Things are their language and they love to touch.

1 July 22021
The sky a broken bone
if I heard the lecturer aright,
and we are the marrow
of someone’s meaning—
you see it clearer in the morning
when the trees raise it up again.
Was that break the famous Fall
of Adam, fall of one into becoming
all of us women and men?

2 July 2021
The barrow has no wheel. It lies on the ground and tries to lift a little bit of earth into the sky, to remind us of the ones who brought us here, ancestors, heroes, demigods, by now we can hardly tell who they really are. But the hill or hummock stands, we step up the slope with some effort, rightly, every step a remembering and memory is hard. Here where they were we are. So sing a little coming down the other side.

2 July 2021
Spinnaker she called it
and it came first
billowing out to show
where we must go,
a cloth like arms outstretched,
white as sea foam
always hurrying to the shore.
Or so I hoped. I love
the ocean best when I’m on land-
the ocean is my neighbor
and I respect its immense privacy.

2 July 2021
I have dared
to love the world
and I have dared
to ask the world
to love me back.
I used a million
words to ask, it
answered with three:
Here we are
the morning said.
And today said it again.

2 July 2021
Suppose you recorded your footsteps and played the sound back instead of walking—would you still get there, wherever it is, kitchen sink or Kailasha? I want a higher tech that takes us to the touch the taste of things while we sit in the joyous fullness of empty space seeing our dreams as they used to say come true.

2 July 2021
Brooding philosopher
dust in the eyebrows,
upbeat theologian
with a shiny nose—
you can always tell
what men are thinking.
But you can never really
know a woman till you
see what her garden grows.

2 July 2021
Second thoughts?
Ok, don’t sign your name.
But don’t cross the words out.

2.VII.21
TRAVELOGUE

New tourist destination: migration towards the silence.

A big place to be, and see, and no one says. No music in your face no noise machines our accidental offspring howling round our knees.

Just as the Germans say *stumm*, *stumm*. Or as we say *mum*. Silence is golden and worth the travel agent’s fee.

2 July 2021
The man who talked about everything sometimes drew pictures on the wall. Words need help, he meant, sometimes and here i am, to say them and explain them and draw their meanings on an empty board. That is why emptiness is so important, without an empty space we couldn’t understand anything at all.

2 July 2021
Love makes monsters masters of entrapment and control, bellowing voices whelming up from what might be decent anxiety.

Or no, it is not love but a smaller, older thing in us, a yelping selfing creature afraid of being abandoned, of being hunngry, of being all alone.

This creature steals the fear we should reserve for lions and typhoons and turns it on the normal interstices of intercourse
and turns them tragic,
every silence a rebuttal,
every closed door an exile,
Eden lost agai.

What shall I call this animal inside,
this jackal of the nervous system?
It really has no other name but me.

3 July 2021
Who am I
when I stumble out of sleep?
And who is asking?

Am I another often?
Or just like Rimbaud sometimes
in the masked ball of poetry?

And who was he to begin with,
that glorious infant?
A poet never grows up—
that is what we should learn.
All the lovers, all the Africas
do not age us. Words
rejuvenate the speaker. Fact.
Now how to teach the body that.

3 July 2021
At last nothing waiting,
I am first in line
for the morning silence
cherished still mid-afternoon.

Put on your golden slippers
before you go out walking,
don’t let the general earth detect
the secrets of your house,
secrets it takes you years to solve,
even you. But our skin knows
more than it’s good for us to think.

3 July 2021
Bear the burden
be a stone

be a bird
and lift the doubt away

somewhere in between
your true me lives

walk with your me
along the damp earth

now you’re talking
now you’re here.

3 July 2021
FORTH IN JULY

The sky has a handle
you can find,
turn it if you dare
and open up
a door. A candle
you can read by
if you learn the letters
and shelter quiet
under the almond trees.

2.
O the East be with you!
the priests cry out,
blessing the parting guests
who wander all ways at once
confident in what they’ve heard.
3.
A wall
is the oldest thing of all.
It taught us slow,
slow, almost all
the things we know.

4.
I am not wrong.
This is not some song.

5.
So rhymes are accidents
of space and time,
sudden revelations of
what may be the truth.
Language is full of them,
they come by and go
like birds in the sky
like birds in your garden.
You are serious and kind,
you try to remember each one,
finch or sparrow but the crow
knows everything for you.

6.
Almost ready to be otherwise
on a bus to Denver, earbuds
reminding you of music once
and the hills ascend, ranches
you pass by on the way to being
a different kind of animal.
That’s why we go. That’s
why we city: to accumulate
the other to hide the self safe in.
7.
It is a holiday,
it gives us right
to reason
with ourselves,
right to be wrong.
Independence Day
and we’re still waiting.

8.
Or is that just me
growling at reality again,
wanting it to be realer
and last longer, a woman
with flaxen hair, piano,
Mahler, Montezuma,
landlord of the moon,
a book that never ends.

4 July 2021
EMBARKATION

Cythera, yes,
the other way
walk barefoot
on the wood of the boat.
boat-wood knows the way,
wet-toed, ankle-damp.
It is for you
the boat is breathing,
upwell and pitch down
with the sea, you think
the waves in place
to carry you, marry you
to your destination.
You are alone on the skiff
the skiff is alone on the sea
the sea is alone on the earth,
so much loneliness everywhere,
marry me, marry me you cry
to the birds as they go by,
hint of land, marry me
you whisper to the cliffs,
sand, strand, jetty
where the boat snouts in.
Step ashore. Rough shingle
presses up in soft soles.
No religion without commandments,
don’t falter now, relax forward
is what the wind inspires,
island of love, you’re here
and all at once everything marries you.

4 July 2021
How could we know what was glaringly obvious to everyone in 1600 if one of them hadn’t written it down before the light went out?

5 July 2021
Last night only a few far off feux d’artifice and only the sound of them, no artful fires lit the dark sky.

5 July 2021
No one to answer  
no one to ask  
the see-saw of silence  
delicately poised.

5 July 2021
It’s one of those days when he mail doesn’t come. The householder feels a mixture of relief and a certain anxiety about neglect. And what are all those postcards, love letters, electric bills doing, huddled together in some governmental dark while he stands on his empty porch admiring sleek hybrids passing wondering what time really means.

5July 2021
In Mexico a man was selling skinned dried snakes in front of the cathedral. I saw this with my eyes--thank God I didn’t imagine it.

5 July 2021
Gaze into the opal of the morning, let the mind alone a moment, watch c carefully out there everything that isn’t happening. In there, I mean, the semiprecious jewel of time, and find the utterly precious diamond we call now.

2.
Sounds plausible..
Pile up rocks to make a garden, let green things intrude upward if and as they can. The people who bought the house where I grew up playing in the garden
paved the whole yard,
no dirt to dig in, t no blue
hydrangea, no pussy willow.

3.
Strange things people do to earth--
every natural space is Eden
from which we are banished by the ingenuity
of our contrivances,
alliances, changes, we fallen angels,
we children of Eve. Try this,
she said, and moved a stone.

4.
O gloom of Robert
thou fearful pest,
canst see no progress,
no rapturous wilderness?
Be civilized, or at least civil--
Isn’t a soft white ceiling
as much fhn to look at as the sky?

5.
Going back to bed
is usually the best answer.
But the sun keeps
chomping up the sky
and we obedient mammals
scurry to keep ups with her.
But still the silken pillow sings
a lullaby sweeter than Isolde.

6.
You recognize the signs:
{l can’t get started”
like the old tune said
from a Berigan long before Ted.
How can anybody get started when they keep saying Wait a minute, what’s going on here? What are you trying to say?

7.
Maybe nothing. Peace on earth and birds out every window. Let the Rhine flow north, the Rhone flow south, it isn’t your fault I keep telling myself.

8.
But still: everyone who uses language is responsible for all that language says. Statements are inherently complicit even when in contradiction.
O child, hold
the welfare of the world
safe in your mouth.
I think Saint Michael said that
as I passed by a church one day,
his statue above the doorway
showed him struggling strong
with he dragon coils of syntax.

9.
So less talk
more truth?
Don’t believe it
language knows
a way out of itself.
The silence
after each line
of poetry shows
the open road.

5 July 2021
DEAR DOCTOR

How can you cure me
if you don’t know who I am?
I don’t play bingo or salute the flag
but I love this land,
all the men and women in it,
animals and rivers and trees.
And I give to the children
all that language gives to me,
language, the treasury of earth.
How can you cure me
if you don’t know even now who I am?

5 July 2021
Red Hook
Lifting it
or shaping it
a different way—
alphabet blocks
such as children use
to structure their words,
little wooden cubes,
very letter a house
of its own, and letters together
make a town that meaning lives in.
Come, knock on any door
and hear the truth.

5 July 2021
Red Hook
I did not feed my difference, what shall become of my hour, the rock shelf, the glacial shale, dream as fossil of the broken day?

Imagine me again. Dubious waking, truth on the lawn. No one can help now, the order of words determined by some other and only me to hear them now one by one.

Pale filets of fish traded for six hours sleep or so it seems. Dream unrelenting, the morning stained with dream. Blessed. Now turn the lock around the stationary key,
now move the wall past the door. Like that, yes, the prisoner walks out. Is there a heart in this chest? All I remember is Yosemite, on a high cliff watching the water silently fall.
Hope is a love song
learn all the words
or make them up
as you go along
but sing, keep singing.

6.VII.21
Men came by and wounded the trees, 
the hurt trees took a while to speak 
but they can teach forgiveness too-- 
sing with what you have, 
sing with what is left, 
there’s always something left to say.

6 July 2021
I pinned a motto above my door
I’M HERE TO SAY
is what it said.
Then I grew shy
at such immodesty
and yanked it down.
Yet here I am.

6.VII.21
Have they finished with it yet,
the inquest into what now means
and what became of yesterday.
Did you do it, or did I?

Something has changed in the night—
the law is fixed, day, then dark.
Dark, then day. The bourgeois enemies
of darkness have to take some blame.

Stanza by stanza the house builds out
around us. A clean tin can to prop
Bellini’s brushes in and keep them clean.
Wet. Drought ruins more than California.

Wait. Just wait. A new white satin stole
for the Mass Priest. Give people lunch.
At times I think that all the books I wrote
don’t add up to a book I bought once
from a bookstore stall for a quarter.
And it was raining then to. Tattered pages, the years pass. Tattered words dusty under my fingertips, a woman smiling as she walks across the sea.

7 July 2021
She stood on the crowded sidewalk at the top of the subway steps, spoke in a fir clear voice but not too loud “the subway is my sea!” and then went down, step by step, her shoulder bag bouncing of her hip at each step.

And when she was down in the dim, she passed through the turnstile legally, shoved her way in. The track is right there, no staircases or halls, right there the canal or sluice of firth that she would sail.

When the train slouched in she slipped aboard sole passenger through those particular doors that then slid possessively behind her.
She stood in the half-empty car wondering where or whether to sit. Standing is heroic, she held firm the cold smooth pole like a conqueror on the pinnacle, watched her subjects and citizens scattered all around the car.

Not one of them is me, she thought. And I am far from my mere self, I am the sea now, I have become what I dared to enter, I am the wave of the moment and no more.

Relief flooded through her at the thought, she slumped content on the padded seath sat right by the sliding doors. She would be the border guard, the sea’s lieutenant watching who or what this ocean holds,
little boy playing on his cellphone,  
guy ith a racing form, granny knitting,  
same as always, true and holy, glory  
of the obvious, eternally right here,  

so she cried out in the softest voice  
who will dare to sail with me  
all the way to where the city ends?  
But the train roared in its tunnel  
so nobody heard, or if they did  
they too took refuge in silence  
the way we do, the way we do.  

So she got off at the next stop  
which was anyway where she lived.  
The sea is always about coming home.  

7-8 July 2021
Thunder woke us.
Learn all you can
before you sleep again
it said, then it roared
some more. Between
wake and sleep we lay
listening to the music
pizzicato, raindrops
on tarpaper roof
or was it the wind?
Where does sleep live?
Knowledge is so hard.

8 July 2021
GETTING UP

Look into the nil,
the Nile of night
flows by, eaves you
crouched, breathless
beside its monuments.

2.
What can it mean.
In the first moments
there is nothing,
or nothing much--
a sense of being here
again, not sure
where here is.
3.
And that is the egypt of it,
the ancient place,
signs you only guess the meanings of,
lion-headed ladies,
owls mute on fossil trees.

4.
So call it today and get up--
that’s the least you can do.
Or the most. Time will tell.
It always has a tale for us.
Up. Up is the point of it,
getting there and being
wherever that is. A dream
is no dressing gown to wear
in the chill morning. Need
less than that to be warm.
5. Naked is best. A blear-eyed reverie that turns out to be a world outside the windowpane. It feels familiar, you lived there or somewhere like it once just yesterday.

6. How slow that river runs and then it meets the tide and the ocean presses it forces it back to what might be me or any you standing by the shore guessing at herons and mallards. Did you know a river could endure such contradictions?

7. Midstream a sturgeon and a seal, wary of each other,
predators, and me on the bank
a third. How big we are
in this small world, we who grow
vaster by everything we see.

8.
So that was up,
and where you got to,
I mean I did,
we’re in this together,
snug in every word of it,
*he became what he heard*
as Blake almost said
or maybe did say, lost now
in the hush of the sea.

9.
Up, where other people live.
No breeze. morning grows on us,
yet the temperature has sunk
one whole degree.
I live by numbers,
and you would too
if you could count
the way I do
in stones and leaves and signal flares
and curious visitors
passing through our zoo.

10.
When she comes
her arms will be full
with a great bouquet
of salad greens,
romaine and arugula
we once called rocket,
her Harley will be cooling
by the fence, the sky
will shimmer with a hint
of rain. When he comes
there’ll be slim booklets
in his hand, a box with some
unusual cheese in it,  
could it be brie  
from camel milk, or hard  

goat cheese from the Andes?  

Books and bottles,  
strange pleasures, snapshots  
of the kayak, of the family cat.

11.  
When all are assembled  
the day begins.  
I tighten my belt  
and sit by the window  
finally forgetting  
how to count and what  
could be counted.  
How many is a river,  
how many is a bird?  
Why am I always alone?
12.
You have never been alone.
That’s how he answer reads,
scribbled across the sky
by a kind but busy crow.
I get the impression
I should stop bothering
the known world with questions
but I know no other song to sing.

13.
Rattle my chain
dear lady
and I will growl
lovingly mayhap
and beg for breakfast.
Stroke the brain
between my ears
with questions of your own,
tender or tense,
I can’t tell the difference.  
Just ask so that I speak  
and what I say will be  
I pray what you mean.

14.  
Still wet from the Nile  
I stand here  
a little shivery  
letting the moist meanings  
roll off my skin.  
Up is so far to climb,  
up is so far away,  
there was a dreamless sleep  
from which I came  
naked, meaning nothing.  
And this is what I find:  
myself by the window  
wondering out loud silently.  
I mean every word reveals  
the silences from which it comes.
15.
Leaves me free
in the land of Up
to be about
the matter of the day.
The French call it Venus Day,
the Germans the Day of Freya.
Love Goddess Day,
I’ll pull a green shirt on
and hope for the best,
look up at the sky and cry
O darling love me like you used to.

16.
God walked through Eden
one morning, spotted Adam
writing fast in his journal,
so many words! God said
It is not good for a man to be alone
and with his radiant hand
slammed the book shut.
Instantly Eve appeared
newborn from the shadow of a tree.
Linden, I think, from their dear
heart-shaped leaves.

17.
I think that’s what the Bible meant
before someone wrote it down.
I may be wrong again
but at least it’s raining
gently now, and soft
rain always sounds like Yes.

18.
Up far enough
to see
what needs
me or might.
Lonely in language
I want to wake you now,
share with me
the silence of the living day.

9 July 2021
When it has begun
the rain is democratic
over its chosen target zone
beyond which dry folk stand
envious and anxious.
But then we always are.

9.VII.21