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On the day Knife
be ready for a fight.
But on the day Star
I am what you are.

There is no day Star.

That light you see’s a
crack in the curtain
a split seam
in the mirror tugged
too tight over the
curves of the world:

I am hair and you are skin
then we are the other way again.

29 April 2011
Birds are building nests in our eaves.
If you believe in the world too much
it cracks open and lets you see
the other animal it is trying to be,

not just me. It is water in the sap
of maple trees, shadows in the grass,
children playing with knives…
and you thought you were the only beast!

29 April 2011
MIRANDA

1. That letter from Prospero you found seemed at first remote from our concerns—that’s what makes love possible, almost inevitable.

   Every bird at all misses its third wing so he runs down the hall squeezes her waist and runs away—

   history is made of this, glad sorrow of us always only one love at a time.

   And every third thought he’ll think of dying and all the other two continue to be you.
2.

Watch watch.
Break breakfast.
Lift your wrist
and lick the wound.
A day is more
than beginning.
Clouds are fugitives
from a cold night.

The cause is the effect.
The woman understood it
all too well, forgave
his intimacies now as
all her life his distances.

“Father, what aileth thee
that thou need’st me again
who once for all did pour
out of you into the silent
nameless personage who made
my body, my lady Mother?
Wouldst thou retract me
into thine own solemnity,
ambiguity? O the brazen clock
Giulio Romano made for us
displayed the Goddess Vesta
her hips swaddled tight as Ægypt
and no celebration!”

3.
But he was silent then
writing one more little prophecy
he’d leave for her tucked
snug in the crook of a hornbeam tree,
low woodwork of that island.
He heard her vaguely
but only one thing clear to him,
*They are all my daughters.*

29 April 2011
The important thing is to have something to worry about. The gates of hell stand open night and day, as Virgil reminds us, the man who stood in a friend’s vineyard listening to the ragas bees hum in sunlight, all ears. Easy to go down there, hard to come back this way out. Or up. We are only what we hear. Without worry we would (and who is this ‘we’ we’re speaking of?) just laze in laxness like a water-logged summer novel all mildew and intrigue, pages stuck, a butterfly goes by. Things do dry out eventually, Hell does freeze over, well-known fact. Lie there thinking about Vikings, names of your friends, smell of freesia, creep of history towards tomorrow afternoon. It will get there surely, never fear. Now find something new to fret about.

29 April 2011
I once knew how to do something
I can’t do anymore.
Something to do with washing dishes
or watching a friend do them,

wet hands, soapy water rinsing off
fluorescent light and sunlight mingled,
something to do with rye bread on the sideboard,
moss on the window ledge, sleeping late.

29 April 2011
The cliifftop hurries to the horizon
on the cliff a young man stands
who takes charge of all this
who is the lord of childhood fantasies

he acts them out, here, on earth,
between air and ocean, himself
a piece of the sky—and he too
once bore your name.

30 April 2011

[The first four lines intact on the way from dream.]
AT A READING

This next poem
is silent.
During the silence
I will say some words
to help you hear it.

30 April 2011
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How far can I trust
my hands to say
what you need to hear?

Come back to me
who never left you,
you are the shape of time

when all the lilacs
understood eternity,
and space itself

needs us
to shape it—
that’s where you

come in,
I saw you move
when all the rest were still.

30 April 2011
Where did the beginning go?
I was sleeping
the sun was shining
things do what they know how to do

the wheel was turning
and then it stopped—
felloe split? axle
shattered? No, this

wheel has no axle
it stands still all the time
and things roll round it,
We are wheel and it is waiting.

30 April 2011
BOSTON TULIPS

for Betty

Wild as weather
they hide in color

the street knows nothing
of them, the tree
is like their sentinel,

the Wren Street bus
goes by and early Monday
picks up half a dozen
quiet children
who have nothing yet
but yellow tulips

with brazen hearts
and small purply red
ones that hide

even from themselves.
Which is also
what childhood means.

30 April 2011