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Robert Kelly

Bard College

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THE NOTARY

1.
Here as far as I can—
a notary sealing a merchant’s will
with the sun. We all are wax
he thinks, we take the marks
pressed into us. We do
what we’re told.

2.
The merchant dies, the widow
sighs, the notary
goes back to the novel he’s been at
so many years he can barely
remember if he’s writing it or reading it.
Who else could know all these facts
but me, he thinks. Then know
everybody could, we are born
knowing everything.

3.
Then we wait for something
to happen. Books
help us to forget. In the courtrooms
year after year the heirs
contend about the merchant’s will.

4.
The notary is summoned but fails to attend,
he’s taken to his bed, perhaps to die,
perhaps just lie there listening to blackbirds
shrilling on the roof tiles. What do they find
that keeps them busy with singing and such.
Such energy to palaver about nothing!
They’re as bad as we are, Or maybe good
is what I mean. He sleeps. Let him sleep.

5.
I mean I am here as far as I can,
I have played into this moment
with all my strength, shoved myself
into this fragile hour.
I have nothing to sell
and nothing to testify.
Either I am a shape on the horizon
or I am the horizon itself,
and yet, though horizons are the furthest
things in all the world,
I insist that I am here. Here.
I don’t blame you for being shocked
at how close I seem to be.

6.
Yet being here at all
is the gravest presumption.
An arrogance, almost,
like sunlight on snow.

6 January 2008
Some people think it’s about lions playing the harp and cocktails rain or shine at five – what is a Pink Lady anyhow? – and somebody out there to keep the Lexus polished. Maybe so, I don’t know, and that’s the brunt it it. What is a brunt anyhow? Some people think life is a board game called Society with bright squares, snakes and ladders style, dice to roll in neat leather cups, winnings and losings and tax shelters on some not quite ex-colonial island in the heat. And the soul plays Monopoly all its own, popes and tzaddiks and rinpoches, real estate deals in the afterlife. What is death anyhow? I feel like such an infant in these matters, I can’t get started (a song before my time) with all these stated aspirations. I wait for buses in the drizzle. I smile at pretty girls in the subway. Shy maybe, but still wandering around. The moon still means a lot to me, I’m not sure what.

6 January 2008
To be shot dead in dream means.

One of my lives is gone.

I still feel the two slugs entering my chest, painless, I see them too, two black hot lumps spread my meat open, the flake of bone.

They must have gotten me in the heart.

One more death to make sense of, one less death to die.

6 January 2008
THINGS LOOKING

at and like things.

A thing and a thing
looking at it.
And some crows.

Morning’s lewd light
belongs us
to the place
to the no-place bright
you can only get to
through the place

things looking at things
we look between.

7 January 2008
That was the explanation embedded in the crow call.

Another crow. They patrol the sky, chase hawks away from little birds.

The cow presumably ends life with the best karma of any animal for her next life as human or as god. Presumably the cow.

The crow likewise among birds —yet giveth not its body to be consumed by us.

Whereas the cow.

Cow and crow and where are we?

When have I ever chased a falcon from the sky when have I fed anybody at all on my flesh?

7 January 2008
The lovely presumption
of having something to say.
To irritate the onlooker
with words cut out of felt
and pressed in layers of tallow
like you know who,
another flimflam artist of the Rose+Cross,
another me or two along the way to him
who is to come,
render our fat and flense our prose
and make some sense of our poetry
while drinking copiously from an empty bottle
and eating shadows with a knife and fork.

7 January 2008
When is a voice like the sky
when it answers
a question you always forget to ask.

But when is a man most like a woman
when he picks up a sword and goes to war

But when is a woman most like a man
when she lies on the sofa and dreams about the moon.

7 January 2008
All of us do
our mother’s work in the world
except the special few who do
our father’s. Art in heaven.

7.1.08
It’s probably not the same. Cthulhu reading his mail below the sea waiting for that invitation only you know how to give, the one you thought with some intensity one night when you thought you were alone.

But that’s the glory and the problem with the world, one is never alone, not even for a second, some god is always watching, and if not him, then always Isis is nearby, always nearby, her face veiled, all the beauty of the world right there, a breath away. You feel her breath, or the tiny flutter of the air when her veil trembles at her breath, not everything is direct, everything gets there, gets to you, and you know it. You feel it in the dark, it is the thing you think is you.

7 January 2008
We stand in the light of our moon
not the one over the frontier.

The rain that falls here wets me,
not you in your dry abode
on the other side of language.

8 January 2008
The snow lies up the hill
scripted with tree shade.

A shadow is anything but random,
is a precise expression
of an equation not easy to write down

but someone knows
angles and intercepts and incidents of light.

They must, I'm sure of it,
staring out
the big clean windows of my ignorance.

8 January 2008
To know all we know
and still know nothing.

Sunshine is a risk,
the lethal aspirin
lurks beneath the tongue.

Bitter taste of things
kept too long in mind,

sound of a sliding door
on a panel truck,
delivery is now.

Nothing to remember.

The willow is the first
to know the spring
and show it.

Gold something happens
in its vague branches.

But not yet. Time
remains an aspiration.

Nothing to forget.

8 January 2008
But it was the Queen of Diamonds not of Hearts
it was a black seven I forget the suit
it was raining the car was locked
there was nobody in the street
there was money in the pockets

I was alone with my self-deceptions
I could have been any age but I am now

8 January 2008
Bracken. What it means.  
A glass broken  
in the woods. Gorse  
or whin. The spikes  
of someone else’s house.

Real estate. Land.  
Property. These words  
hurt. On your own feet  
you stand. Nothing  
on anybody else’s  
anything. Ever.  
Thorns. Ferns. Far  
as I have come  
there is no here  
around me, just me

standing in a place  
that defines me  
but gives me no clue  
about itself. It hides.  
The man said it all

hides, that’s what it does.  
She does. Her veil  
enormous. Endless.  
But to lift it. Worth  
a life to do it, it

is what life’s about.  
Not a penetration.  
A permission. Leaves  
of their own power  
flourish from twigs.

The veil lifts away  
in the simplest breath.  
You see the one you  
have always meant  
to see. To be.
8 January 2008
FUN

is the untranslatable
despondency of time

let loose on a mind
all at once,

the funhouse is where the floors
tilt away from the footsteps
and the staircase falls.

Fun is space turned back into time
compressed, breathless laughter
and tears soon after but not yet.

9 January 2008
Are we there yet?
Is the plum
ripe already
on the cherry tree
is the coal in my
cellar a diamond yet?

Once I wanted
everything to be
a woman and it was.

9 January 2008
JANUS

the War Gate
has been open all my life—

Spain, Shanghai, Ethiopia,
the mountains of everywhere.

I pray to the god Janus,
Lord of Doors,
father of openings:

father, shut at last the iron door.

9 January 2008
Four Senses for Susan

When all the air
is held inside
it’s called a word
waits to be said

When all light
is held inside
it’s called an eye
smiling back

When all the earth
waits underneath
it’s called the skin
that holds you in

When all the water
runs down the hill
it’s called feeling
everything new.

for Susan Quasha on her Birthday, 9 January 2008