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Till I’m far enough from the mirror
to see somebody else in there
I’ll keep telling you lies.
All kinds, sweet and otherwise.
By observation I am grown scrupulous
to my manifold defects. My eyes
purpose to deceive us both.
See the European light come settle
down around a modest Indiana town.
Nobody around. Everything now
ready to begin again at last. Now
everybody is there but me. Me,
I’m never near when you need me
but never far. But look up the street:
that’s us up there, fast asleep.

5 June 2008
The partition of an hour
into slices of cheese, say,
or the miracle-workers hauling
backhoes up the hill

and a whole basilica
afloat in space! Who needs
your dreamboat ocean, Iowan,
when you have air?

Who needs me when you have you
almost, you’re almost in your grasp.
strike fast. Human identity
lasts as long as a loaf of bread.

5 June 2008
Cuttyhunk
Lying personage
stretched out on grass
reading these words
as I write them down
some distance away
on a cold wet day

some flecks of
what looks like snow.
This personage should
take these words to heart
so artfully eavesdropped
and come in from the real.

5 June 2008
Last night in perfect dark the bell was going crazy and the waves crashed louder than I’ve ever heard them in no wind. The raintree by the wall breathed quietly as usual. My breath and pulse coupled with the sea and sang the bell in me.

5 June 2008
The salt says red.
Don’t try to pretend you can be everything.

What you are is salt.
And what salt says is you saying it.

5 June 2008
Let it be or have been a dream
a waking animal
undisturbed by the increscent light
arriving towards us
and balbulous with sympathy
where he bends above her sleeping form
inquiring Are you, are you…
and all that comes is …comfortable my love?

6 June 2008
Cuttyhunk
We ask each other
always the wrong questions.
It’s a kind
of politeness

like children learning
baseball, rules,
comportment it
behooves to have

if they are to be one
day picked for the game.
Nor is it with us
one, or not yet,

or yes but no
rules to it we
are likely to uncover
asking as we are

little words
to twist in the wound
yet again in
hopes to heal.

6 June 2008, Cuttyhunk
Around the corner from something
where there are no squares
and the only round thing
is this cold apple remember
from somewhere else
in a squall of light it came
here it is, settled firm
like a house on the ground
and no wind. The rain
walks over the sea to tell you
something it neglected
to tell me. Help me
I have nothing left to think.

6 June 2008, Cuttyhunk
So many of them born today
and what they taught me.
How to eat animals. How
to climb a ladder up
the back of the house.
How to speak Russian.
Play chess in the dark.
Beat a drum silently.
Look all the way out windows.

6.VI.08
WHEN ALL THE AIR IS GONE

As if we had less thing more about
the careful waiting by the gate
and the woodcock come in from the moor
on the spring’s tail or then the Fowler
—use birds to hunt birds— it might be
all of it right here. Train in it.
As with music a thin arm lays a thinner
bow athwart a fat cello and nobody knows.
Somehow full of pain the morning fog.
Is it just that Sun vexes it from behind?
I mean the opposite of what it sees—

    celabor, I shall be hidden
    a tower with windows and no door.

Nothing will ever come closer to you than a sign,
imagine that Sake of Heaven you cry out
Eve came to Adam in a leather coat
showing tricks the serpent taught her
taking the measure of the Old One they saw
now and then strolling in his garden. And we
are in the wrong story. We closed
the gate behind us and moved into another,
now it is time for this one too to fall away,
did you bring your clippers and your calipers,
first cut through the hedge then measure
the diameter of desire on the other side
and here we are, nobody but we can
do this trick either so follow me care-
heartedly dear where the record ends.

Now spring a rose to suck your merriment
the words of most songs are dumb enough
but it’s the music kills, the lyric plague,
the galvanic dead their mendicant guitars
violin a crossbow aimed at gentle hearts
your brilliant body where a drum goes home.

7 June 2008
Cuttyhunk
Or if a sparrow then four of them
and no forgetting
and a white bird over the harbor
we quarreled pleasantly about
small egret or large gull
too far away to tell

like everything else
the sun eight minutes from earth
by line of light, a bell
on the wave lift. Everything far.
Two doves on the deck rail
studying me as if I too
were finally beyond reach.

7 June 2008
Cuttyhunk
Take the sea out later
when the picture’s done
then the cloud and the ship
and that cliff looks too
like a face to be rock
or even dirt, take away
the stupid birds and
then the beauty comes.

7 June 2008

We need words as we go along, their sounds and sense of meaning something. But when the poem’s done, all of that shimmers and disperses like morning fog, burnt off by the ferocious clarity, the sun of pure form.
Hot day brings everybody out
snakes on the lawn girls in tanktops
pink weekend yachtsmen chug in.

Weather is really our only country
flies its own flag and salutes it
we tag along beneath its squalls

obedient to oxygen. The birds
who seem to be more citizens than we
are old hands in that compliance,

ride on it or tide it our, depending.
What am I saying? They have no hands.
Only we have. Idle in Sabbath sun.

8 June 2008
Cuttyhunk
Something to say there
but not mild not many.
Parsipanny they tried to drag me
or Summit with its marble priests—

when in doubt teach people what to do.
It seems the oldest rule.
A book of matches is like some Roman thing,
the world has lost one more addiction—

so who will own us now?

8 June 2008
To pay attention is another story in this one. Sudden vacation in the middle of a (say) sentence. Or looking at the flame below the kettle all at once comprehend the color of oxygen. And why. And maybe even go there a while and walk along that beach, skim stones in that fiery lagoon while a strange red cat winds in and out around your feet. See what happens when you pay attention inside what you were paying attention to. The water boils. Not a cat in the world.

8 June 2008
Having served so long desire
must serve fulfillment

deer in the headlights

turned to men

9 June 2008
The malcontrivance of the ink
led me not to write
the word I should not have written.

Obedient to obstacles
I accept for once
the sunlight of the give,

slouch sunburnt later to the din
of my scatterbrained projections
as if that’s what walls are for.

9 June 2008,
Cuttyhunk
Stepped in place
below the blue conundrum
lambasted by the cries
of children: schoolyard music
of fear and fondness
build a creaky house
an aftertaste of lostness and a gull.

High home,
spirit spittle moist dry mind
so that I love again! he says
naming an improbable resuscitation
of an enigma anyway,

if ever you did love you never lost it,
as any overhead can tell you, bird or not.

9 June 2008
Cuttyhunk
DAWN

Sunrise round here is soft
a kneeling woman eating strawberries
subtle stuff, dawnbirds
and you can hear their wingbeats,
those passersby. Peasant
sparrows earliest to work.
The gulls are mostly stepping here and there—
enough description, enough meter.
The point of it is no fixed measure,
a quiet heave of light
until more ordinary things appear.
The ones that stand still all the time
while east turns flesh
first and the wind walks up.

10 June 2008