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a little bit about my life outside this room
our room, about me
that I was trained as an economist
here’s for today and last time
thank you for waiting
and thanks for not making such a fuss
about my forgetting my checkbook last week

and even he I sometimes want to cherish
hold him to my heart
and answer his stifled questions
child of my process
with glorious half-truths and thrilling reinforcement
sometimes I hold him in my mouth
to taste the difference
what I wouldn’t give to give away what I keep so hard
always holding on
teach me to let go
it sounds like a nice thing to say but do you want to
I want to stop clutching
I clutch at everything
and then it clutches back

wouldn’t growing older be letting go?
the more you are the more you have
more have more hold
and there are habits like the salt in food
and I forget who I’m talking to
then the truth comes out
looks around and goes back in
who are you talking to now
is there a doctor in the house
blues comes from blue devils
there were pills made from mercury
to cure syphilis cure
the madness came from syphilis
love sickness all
madness comes from sex
that’s true isn’t it doctor
whatever they tell you outside
it’s true isn’t it
sex makes you crazy
whether you do it or hold it in
love is just a complication in that disease
do you have a family, doctor
do you go home at night to a standard life
I am a telephone did you know that
I don’t know don’t care to know
whose voices speak and where they’re from
what does it matter who screws the bulb in
the lamp comes on and we all see
I think the light is like a single word
someone out there knows how to pronounce
did you ever read about Kabbalah
how god is a face and his name
is the same as someone else
and we sit all night playing bingo in the temple
to shift around the letters and the numbers
do you know every number means something
and when she gets a certain set of numbers
the old woman cries Bingo and gets her prize
but young mystical boys with long black hair
sneak in and steal her winning card
then they know the word
the absolute word of that relative night
this is a fact I’ve seen it
they take it home and study it
and make computer programs to work it out
because every winning card contains a secret
the name of a powerful angel who rules tomorrow
an angel that could bring them princesses and gold
or all the beautiful silky carpets of Isfahan
or tell you things that even you don’t know
when they decode the card they’ll know
who finally will love them and take them in
that’s all the world is ever waiting for isn’t it
doctor that’s what sex also only is about
that someone stands with a smile with an open door
and says yes you’re the one I’m waiting for
now come in and stay as long as you like
because my body is forever and I am yours
that’s what the young boys are after their hair their dirty fingernails
cut to the quick, their beautiful dark eyes their fleshy lips
I’ve seen them pick the cards up off the folding tables in the hall
seen them steal their grandmothers blind, steal the cards the words
that come down from the mother of the world
and sneak away with them to read them all night long
like naughty French boys reading Genet by flashlight
only the mystics study on sturdy dirty wooden tables
under naked bulbs, all night they’d work
and then days later I’d seen them these so-called religious students
hollow-eyed but driving big Lexuses
and I knew they had worked the numbers out
and called out the pure names of power
just at the going up of the dawn
and the world heard them
and made things fall into the places they called out
the places they made by calling out their names
don’t you think we do that when we talk
we’re just rearranging dictionary words
everything we’ll ever say is in that book
I notice you keep one on your desk
do you ever open it at random and see what the day says
when I came in today I looked up at your building
as I always do and there was a seagull perched on your window
I wanted to tell you when I came in but I forgot
I think it was a sign of something a sort of sign

4 October 2002
is it language? is it languish?
and this languishing
is only a long grieving
a mirror for a lost sheen
like when the rain dries on the pavement
and all the swift red lights are gone

tail lights? tail lights?

bracket me
to understand
I keep all my doubts to myself
what good are they to you
whoever you are
no value to the other
serene alterity “I” postulates
when spoken in an empty crowded room
empty of you
the one I really
want to talk to
is there only one
in the gimcrack luster of our common room
this poster of Joris Ivens
this bronze rhinoceros
when space has to dream itself open
dream an opening into itself
so you can come in
please come in and let me talk to you
the one I really mean
it’s really weak and low of me to want it I want it
I want the lustrous ear of your attention
your rich hair curled around your hearing
you who are the other pole of me
negative ion that lets me breathe
free in the crowded emptiness of my life
never mind your money

masturbation is the next step up from sex
she said and I confess it startled me
as if you could go alone
to that holy mountain Noah landed on
Mount Marriage Mount Ararat propagation
each according to her kind
and no me needed to that complex sacred you

as if you could enter the Sabbath
you and God taking turns in the dark

I confess her statement startled me wordless
I confess I left it and her unresponded to
so once more she drifted out dissatisfied
I confess I wonder how much longer she’ll keep coming
how long she will accept the deferral of her desires
I confess I push the envelope
I confess I frustrate her more often than I need to
because I want to see what she will do
I confess I’m a little bit afraid of losing her
I am not afraid of using her
we are here in Eden to be used
I confess I’m looking for a way to bring it up again
the word she said
just in case she was when she said it
standing on some giant shoulders
and could see for a moment over the actual wall
and could see what sex really was about
and what it was and how it moved and where how far it could go
and what would be there when we got there
and she wasn’t just being clever
my gut feeling is she was just being clever and she is clever
I don’t want to take a chance though
of missing vistas her sick eyes might see

a car flashing in and out of sunlight
shadow road
shallow go
I dreamed it again
the boy with the guitar
this time he came out and put the guitar
down flat on the road
then he lay down beside it
and cars had to swerve around him
some drivers swore out the window
some just swerve as if he and his guitar
were roadkill or a dumb old dog
the weird thing is that though he didn’t touch it
at all the guitar was playing
I still can hear it
music I didn’t like actually
I don’t know what it was some sentimental folk song
I could see the guitar strings pluck themselves
I began to get uneasy almost scared
something was coming
I wanted to warn him
but I felt paralyzed the way you do
before I could do anything anyhow the truck was there
a big white oil truck with a cartoon of a bee on it
and it didn’t even try to miss them
it crushed the guitar in the middle of the music
you could see splinters and flinders flying out from under the wheels
but when the truck was gone the boy was still there
he didn’t seem hurt
he was just lying there on his back
looking up into the sky
and he looked not shocked, just a little surprised
and a voice in my head said
he wonders where the music went
how did you feel then did you wake right up?
I lay there wondering about it the way you do
I had been so afraid before the truck
but now nothing seemed so bad
all that fear and anxiety
had suddenly come and just as suddenly was gone
and I lay there wondering what it would be like to be free

free?
really free, not worrying about guitars or people
just taking things as they come

is that what you think the dream was saying?
I don’t know, maybe I’m the guitar
and he’ll miss me when I’m gone

you think you are the guitar?
I can’t stand the monotony of being in love
always worrying about him and what he’s thinking
instead of what I’m thinking
always wrapped up in my feelings
it’s so sentimental it’s degrading
see the guitar was playing all by herself
and he doesn’t really care
maybe the boy isn’t even listening
maybe that voice in my head is a lie
or just my voice consoling myself
love is so boring
so I think it was a dream of suicide

and here the mind is loath to follow
how can the therapeut
protect the patient from her own insight
how can he push her
out of the snug house of interpretation
into an affirmation
false as it might be
just to keep her going keep her living
false it would be
but false only to the moment
we live by moments
till the night comes
when the moments slay us

there is a land beyond your feelings

but how can she be told it’s there and how to get there
he can’t find it himself
maybe they could go there together
physician heal thyself
go with her hand in hand
the oldest mistake
the ark the Ararat
growing old together stifled in one room
you think plaster walls are some far horizon
and sleep like Fafnir on a heap of feelings
you’ll never feel again

horror of being with the one you want
he has to say something about suicide
where she stopped her recitation
and how she’s waiting and what will he say
what will he ever say
live, live for me
if you won’t live for yourself
you fool, do you need me
even to adjust the will to live
in you, must I reach in
so deep and touch that valve?

suicide is such a self-important word
the little threat that threads its way
through so much discourse
love me or I’ll leave you alone in the world
leave you crippled ever after
you will grieve for me forever you will be paralyzed
by closing down your feelings so you don’t feel me
sneering at you from the gates of death
mocking you for the wicked thing you made me do
making me leave the room forever
there are so many forevers in this conversations
yet the word is a sort of safety
when people start thinking of forever
nothing can ever happen now

and Now is safe from all that rhetoric
Suicide, you think? that’s interesting
had you been thinking consciously of it that day
I always do, but thinking about it is so boring
so humiliating, killing myself for love,
it’s just another shitty part of love
of bad relationships
has he been treating you badly lately
it’s not about him it’s about me
I feel humiliated by wanting him so much
it doesn’t matter what he does
sometimes he’s just exactly what I want and sometimes not
but it’s the non-stop wanting that makes me sick
sometimes I’m just a rolled up ball of neediness
whimpering in the corner of the bed
that’s why I feel I’m the guitar

the orderly unfolding of her career
is distasteful to her friends
she works hard at self-promotion
so you know when you meet her
you’re only a rung on some ladder
her biggest dream is to leave you behind
and always want her still and want her more

I have to cherish the unspeakable
the least thing
the leaf says

the wormhole in the woodwork
through which another universe sneaks in
or we fall out
sometimes I’m nowhere
but what I hear

and have no place to stand
but the words I say

Lancelot and Guinevere
are all about not being me

a bird calls I hear it distinctly
what is a bird doing here

everything turns out to be
a suburb of a lost city

deep below the riverbed I hear
the lawnmowers of Atlantis
that time when I still had feelings
and every touch was in the dialect of truth
in that country where I truly lived
there was no neutral thing no vague
indeterminate perception
and that is what Plato must have meant
by the sunken island
when everything that was fresh and new
was inundated with the ordinary

but in my country we were scientists
were profligate and bold
we were as much animal as man
sign of the centaur
as much tree or rock as animal
all the categories knew how to speak

can’t you speak now
aren’t you saying everything you mean?

o meaning, meaning
doesn’t mean very much

back then the smallest piece of lead or chalk
knew how to talk
and more than that
we knew how to listen
and there was no need for all this talk of meaning
because we were with each other and with things
and there was no distance

language is distance
isn’t that the answer
why we talk three times a week
and never get any closer
any clearer never
close to where the goal’s supposed to be
not ever close to one another
I call you doctor and you
call me hardly ever by my name
sometimes I think you forget it
because all of us are pretty much the same to you
the talking sofa and the listening chair

I never send letters because the time of arrival
I mean when she gets the letter later
who knows what I’ll be thinking
even e-mail is better since there’s a chance
she’ll be waiting at her monitor to receive me
right then when I need her I mean need to tell her
when I need her hear me
later I might mean different
and then it would a lie I told her
god I have to tell enough lies

5 October 2002
without doing it by accident you know
what I mean, are you a knower
do you know
how hard it is to say something
and then put it back into writing
because I know you’ll think I’m crazy
but I think everything we say
everything we feel
is just something we read inside us
some screen never stops scrolling
these words I’m telling you now
I’m reading off the wall inside
why don’t we just leave them there inside
not copy them out on pieces of paper
clay whatever, isn’t it bad enough
to think in the first place
that that’s what people mean by thinking
this recitation of what somebody writes inside you
whoever made language up
language is never me is never mine
and they call this thinking, reading these
words that never stop passing
isn’t it bad enough that we feel?

what about people who don’t know how to read?
that’s a racist lie an elitist lie
everybody knows how to read
everybody knows how to read the words I mean
every tribe no matter how ‘primitive’
every person is reading all the time inside
they don’t all use our alphabet
that semitic conspiracy
maybe the letters were a big mistake
to make us read those little marks
instead of the glorious signs inside
the real words we see of the world

doesn’t very beautiful, how you say that,
but let me ask you by your own terms
what are you yourself reading or translating
when you say what you’ve just been saying
how does it connect you with the letters
I mean the letters you don’t write on paper
to the women you don’t want to tell lies to

you don’t have to remind me
I was listening while I was speaking
I admit sometimes I’m not
but now I was, language
is so after the fact
by the time you get around to listening
even though that’s your job
no Freud never said it is the listening treatment it is the talking cure
you do it I am the witness
the dumb monument to your discoveries
well anyhow you listen
and by the time the words get to you
even though my lips are still
wet with saying them
licking them
by that time I’m thinking something else
and everything is full of lying

Do you change your meaning so often?
I’m not talking about meaning
meaning is a distraction from desire
that’s all I’m talking about, wanting
the want that burns beneath the words
those ashy letters that you leave
language is the ash of desire

my enemies in the moon
have done this, thrown down this tree
so that it cracks my head open
and lets my dreams spill out
and you who stand there
are of their party, you stand there
and know nothing,
you think it was just a ray of sunshine
bright hot afternoon autumn light
slicing through the trees that hit my head
I say it was a tree
thrown down from heaven
and the tree was on fire
so that you just saw light
you saw it cut across my face
and you thought nothing
but what pretty eyes I have
when the light catches them
just that way all amber
you don’t see the broken topaz
smashed in my heart
the dark blood fading as it dries
my so-called eyes

for I have few friends on earth
and none in heaven
I have done battle with the princes of the air
and now I pay the price
but in my wrath is my reward

when you see anger
you remember me

see how my dreams spill and soak the general ground
already I’ve told you more than anyone
do you think I’m coming to trust you
is it your silence throws a switch in me
and I, like nature, abhor a vacuum
and so hurry to fill it
with the only thing I have to tell
the truth of such as me
that’s why I’m talking so much today
and also you looked tired when I came
I thought I’d help you out today
and do my share of telling
and carry us, then you asked about the cut above my eyes
where something fell and hit me
and I knew my hour had come at last
and all my challenges were finally answered
and I was a marked man
struck by a tree branch hurled from heaven
specifically from the moon
where the sneaking solar spirits of authority and revenge
skulk at night and drench their weapons
with the blood of dreams, the venom they distill
from the saliva of sleeping women
and with such elfshot arrowheads
my brow is wounded doctor
thank you for noticing
my wound and no one does
you know that mostly I’m invisible
only my heart shows up on x-ray
a lump of coral from the Philippines