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Whom it is allowed to read

a man called Word
a book for half a dollar
full of the other history
of this same world
they call the dark —you must
be wide awake to read it

plums on the trees money in your arms
in old houses on hill sides
a man among the masks the women
staring himself in the face
at evening, worn out by wanting

each touch an inscription
in an unknown language
he was born to decipher

and all the words so rescued
recoil on him, become his word
he speaks unclearly,
the nurse bends low to hear him,
héis touches her thigh and dies
as if touch were all we ever had to say.

17 March 1994
Can we wake the want inside the fear again
—there may be a certainty (villa —
summer — Tiber — grapes
to be touched — hard — into wine,

drink these interruptions

mode of fair woman
encastelied in the sleeping city,

wake this wind now, walks hard
up among the sycamores.

17 March 1994
The womb was difficult, 
things, and doors. 
Going through. To have been there 
so long (each month a decade 
of life in air).

And be forgiven 
into this. How can I bear 
to do it again? By that Protective 
Ignorance. Keeps the thing. 
The things. Going. 
Through the door. 
The far-off music, that strange 
breathy yelping turns 
out to be language.

Happy Birthday. It turned out 
it was not enough 
to turn somebody on. 
Each of us. Needed. 
Further handling. Treatment 
(traction) in this infinite 
regard. Look at me. 
No one 
has ever 
been older 
than you. 

18 March 1994
All those Canada geese
over just one woman
s’ head a maze meant for me?

18 March 1994
[responding to Catherine Schieve’s e-music of even date]
GRAIL STORY

If I got close to the farrier would I feel the horse at last especially that sinew running from the storm-clouds down by way of the withers to the iron hoof and that muscle not slay but instruct me (the way an old woman does with a very young child, when life is something not wholly in either of their grasps)? If I stood with his curry-comb his file his fire patiently at the animal’s even more patient side (red as oak leaves after the hardest winter of our lives) and waited for his articulate needs to move me could I be said to be a man among Moseses an ordinary traveller, an eater of savory dhal?

I wanted to be a goer, one who left the polished highway but never the vehicle, who powerfully snaked the old Pontiac through pine woods and chasms, and down that sensuous ravine all water waits for but I hurried, there! to the cleft in the absolute earth that runs straight to the dome, the blue-light laccolith city in the sheath of earth’s mantle where all magic is boiling and old books and radishes on white plates and the way cheese changes in the night and paper suddenly fills with light-giving words and their eyes were always waiting for me, there was never a problem of finding, all I had to do was go. Assent to the edges and just go.

19 March 1994
SPRING SONG

I have brought my tools — the butter and the man,
the cup with the moon in it, you know,
the old dry tree that suddenly
has a dream of its own,

green one,
I loved you as you bare-stepped up the shingle
from our Severn. My tools
include remembering you,

smrti,
everything that has been spoken but not written,
thought out but not shouted, maybe whispered,
dreamed and thus done.

For dream
is a mighty doer
and I have brought those dreams to stack up in the night
higher than cities, a whisper

everyone can hear, frightening the crowd with wooden spoons.

20 March 1994
SPRING SONG

I have brought my tools — the butter and the man,
the cup with the moon in it, you know,
the old dry tree that suddenly
has a dream of its own,
the green one coming
bare-instepped up the shingle
from our Severn. My tools
include remembering her,
everything that has been spoken but not written,
thought out but not shouted, maybe whispered,
dreamed and thus done.

For dream
is a mighty doer

and I have brought those dreams to stack up in the night
higher than cities, a whisper
everyone can hear, frightening the crowd with wooden spoons.

20 March 1994 / 29 April 1994
I am hungry
the river
looks like a loaf of bread.

20 March 1994
As entering on a causeway filled with stones and surfaced over with slabs of shale a man might cry out for his wife and wonder where she is,

he left her sleeping in a gaunt motel and now stands across the street from an immense orrery operating around the largest spherical building on earth

over which a gilded polychrome caparisoned steed is circling, a sensuous mechanism if there ever was one prancing in the sky and he is alone.

But I want to know more than that
I want the Terrorist to be captured on the moon
his great sickle of a face reaping the dark.

I want to know things are as they are— the great orrery big as The Cyclone, big as a roller-coaster in Japan— whirls slow to move all the planets we have and mark

each by each planet’s god, riding serene or upside down or blindfolded in red velvet, each god or goddess in his or her car, golden car,

and the blue sky seemed like an impertinence.

21 March 1994
OFFERING MILK TO THE MOUNTAIN

As ever as was compatible with blue information
the nuts hidden by squirrels are they between rafters of
this is not my house my house is a pale remark
left out in the rain where is it now the pigeon-grey of its exhaustion
like light when who slept? You take off your clothes
for no better reason than memory. This is what we do.
Profligate trolley cars going our own way waking
everybody up it is old-fashioned it is raining it is a city.
We follow the grooves in which sturdy lengths of steel are laid
dully glistening in thick reminiscence. When I am born
I bring the whole world with me into light. This very world.
This only. It remembers me piece by piece until I am it.
Tail lights. Battle of Jericho. The old woman explaining Jesus
wrongly I think. What do I know. What do I know?

22 March 1994
On action guard. Spelt scattered at the cavemouth. Who lives here, for that matter? All I meant to ask was now. Cloud on a capstone, a well unsealed. Drink me down there, drink me down. Drench in wanna. In the water far down there the stars are seen displayed in mirror order rayed, special, inside out. On Captiva Island waiting for her dough to rise.

If we said what our dreams told us, there wouldn’t be a sane conversation left on the planet. Imagine the headlines if we told what we knew, especially if we told what we were told to say:

FINALLY PERMITTED TO INSERT

THROW SPOONS AT TO MAKE WHO LOVE YOU

BITE A BEACH AND LET SALT SILENCE ME

And so on. But we don’t. It seems important not to. Yet it means that every day, every day, we disobey our dreams. Disobey our dreams but live. What Iroquois would dare? Yet we do, and seem to survive, but how long? Is that what is killing us all the time? Guesstion mark.

Some kind of silence is our science, maybe our best one, and have to make do with that. To the committee of the dead presiding over our ridiculous preferences and pathetic hopes. Hereby submitted to your sinister, but kindly-meant, authority. I have spoken.

22 MARCH 1994
Asbestos? Something better, eliciting sweetest traumas of seduction. After seeing both elected senators trying on sleepwear, a sigh breathed. Every sign touches our skin.

22 March 1994
To escape into sensation,
out of description into pure filthy sensation
the animal of me
marking the territory of the sky

making mine and making me.
Forget everything into pure mindfulness

to run away into this one I am.

23 March 1994
This is where I have it in mind
to open the door
and therein will I find
an old man lurking

the way a smell lingers
in the hair
this old party in his room
assembling his prayers

glimpses of the moon
help him and the chickadee
waltzing on the windowsill
and the wind

whatever it brings
and the brick wall old
brick wall across
the courtyard color of

Missouri in spring thaw
I wonder who he is
in me his raptures
pass into snoozes his

nobleman’s fingers
still dance on the margins
of books he half
reads half remembers

words or sunbeams
who can tell
the difference
is a tower he lives

taking it all in
his head his heart
that thing so far
away his body is

a door
is not different.

23 March 1994
Whose majesty would be different
were a block of wood
shaved off a living tree and still
slavering with pine sap
the stick of it I handle
holds tight to me — this
is the material world. I am it
particular. You come along
with it. I am stupefied
at the grandeur of this simple
failure, a thing
in the world of intentions.
High wind in bare trees.
In this forest we walk in music.

23 March 1994
Once more from the gay lord an apparition
uncoiling like rhododendron leaves at thaw
like anything you choose, and you do choose, every
spineless drifting wifty act long ago is chosen
and by you. So when the Lord of Liking It shows up
and beckons from the corner, be calm.
His face is your face. You eat
what you are eating with. We call
and it is love, we sleep and it is world
we wake to shivering. Until we find him again
never dependably far away.

24 March 1994
When we are
only a part if that
of something
a radish or a root

something they eat
or throw away
our chances
diminishing with frost

to be at all
let alone to be
consumed
a verity lingering

in the way my finger
feels on my skin
a trance of ordinary
selfishness

the touch itself
auguring some
other as if the goal
of being were being

in relation to.

24 March 1994
A FRIDAY IN GERMINAL

I have something to tell you green
I think if we stopped killing
we might soon stop dying

2.
Think of a single day on earth without murder—
what would the weather learn
from our forbearance, what would the rocks
change into if they saw that we,
greatest of all killers among the beasts,
the Animal with Enemies, that we
had stopped at the door of our house
and put the rifle down, and the hangman
left his terrified clients to sleep late
and the abortionist went to the mountains
and fishermen stayed home, and nowhere
nobody killed nothing, is that right,
three nevers make one forever?

3.
And this is the day when an angel
walked through the window and announced
through a shimmer of rainbow remarks
that nothing was hurrying into something
and a brightness lit up the girl’s body
we still can see our way through the dark with,
dull glow of godhead in the gloom of desire.

There is just enough light to see not to kill.

25 March 1994
Feast of the Annunciation
A Gnostic Fragment, After Melville

Sent sort of unbidden to the well
he wondered what to do with all the water
the stars were in it the silvery pail went down
and hauled up everything he knew how to see

and all the rest he tasted. Drink me down
he hears it saying and he assumed
the water knew his name,
remembered him from the last time

when the stars first fell into the well.

25 March 1994
ROUGH ROAD

My handwriting shakes
time
is passing so fast.

25 March 1994
Can it meet? We need
the inly going
if we would account for those woodsy madmen,
women, in the high pine places
deviating around the god. For a god
is always someone new
and an old god hardens to a law.

So the stories of origin tell or should tell:
When the world was very old
already the gods were young
and in their novelty did this and that.
High fives on the steps of heaven,
go and find the galaxy you left in last night’s clothes.

Thrilling boredom of pure observation!
Pentheus! King Grief in Vision.
Eardrums understudy jungle telegraph
—words always just confuse him

When you hear them speaking (or us speaking)
withdraw your mind and think about
a red tile roof in Tuscany silence by noontime heat.

25 March 1994
The war at the door.  
Cat skunk squirrel  
chipmunk possum mole  
and the high blue stukas of the jays—

it goes like that from idea to pretty  
in one upwelling frightened glide  
glissando on the harpstrings.  
Poetry.

26 March 1994