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END OF THE FAMILY

Break a bone they said —those grievors
politicked to jungle —is that a word—
your grandmother supposes for all her father
disappearing in the Raj a cup of tea
is all your Orient, your gold mistake.
Dare not now put milk in it
(father of a hair comb, a nib, a spanner).
Ten be nimble waiting as a gate. Jack.

Unthinkable workmanship of doors.
Jack of Doors. A trick or two to play
on Father Time who's always pushing pawns.
Answer the phone, it is the moon
trying to dapple you all over with his light.

10 November 1993

BANANA SKINS

Vests on the trees I please
no one but myself
you understand and sometimes thee
my thowtening amie my world my fox or
vixen scurrying through shrubbery

jazz's a music made

of some deal new and some deal out
of fashion swing to juvenate
or make it new, mon père E,
jazz makes it new

not song but singing it
by touch

this kobold chatter of a cold
crepuscule is for you, mon E,
given the prestidigitations of
a painfully marvelous fugue.
Finger polish. Archaic Tatum common.
Powell armature of sound my real
father sold bananas by the *hand*.

11 November 1993

ORION

Astonished at Orion rising cold and huge
focused through the bare linden tree

just where he was last year, astonished
as if either of us had any choice in the matter,

this one big house we have in the bright
seed scatter he strides through and I forget.

11 November 1993

If I do this right
you won't know what time of day
or which way the wind was blowing
through leaf scraps in the linden trees

but you'll know why copper's red
and represents the love that women bring to men,
time's own last will & testament
is color, only, scads of color
left to the ungrieving

and you'll know the answer
the wind gives to every question
the world is the place where I can touch you

now I have explained my agitation.

12 November 1993

THAT IT MIGHT BE A TIME FOR WAITING

for the disagreeable destinies
in the arms of November
to make us their promises
again, the sky trees, passage
all too quickly into the mist
where the dark message is read.

Sleep has a pain of its own
I woke from into this peculiar
not quite familiar identity,
my bones don't fit right.
My fingers don't fit the spoon.

We make it through, convinced
to the end that the whole thing
is just a misspelling people believed,
a mistake so obvious that nobody
ever bothered to correct it.
And we live with it still.

13 November 1993

Maybe just to keep out of sight
when the pigeon people were up on the roofs
flinging their flocks into the air
and standing stupid I thought on hot tar
waiting for the birds to move the wind
and the sun would fall into Brownsville
I stayed in the streets, the streets
were what I understood and never
the people who hurried on them, people
with places to go, beds and tables
to get to, whereas the world I knew
was all color and thoroughfare.
I knew the lines they inscribed in the city
with their bodies as they moved
walking firmly to known places
and I lingered loving the saunter
of their shapes, the slow show of passage,
not the preposterous goals.

13 November 1993

HOLY SONNETS

Thankmeal our grace is given
backpats glib to bless a benefactor
built before the world, a “lamb”
he said, with intelligent eyes
a devious metaphor, a man who died
then stopped being dead, a rise
in the rhythm of the mind, come clear.
I wish I could. There is only heart,
heart and blue women in the street
whose feet moves three centimeters above the stone.
Only I mean one heart I mean, a thought
nestled int he chambers of its care
different from I am. You want simple?
There is a light that nothing knows.



Be like him by being holy not being,
loopy with definitions and divining,
smart voices of the local gods emerging
from the sensuous lips of smug channelers
claiming strange earthrights. A ploy
in lust's legislature, to listen
to her plummy voice inside your private
bones, parts, preachments, halogens
whizzing kidneyed to dispose.
You love to listen and not hear.
Whereas the back country still's a rock
that yammers dawnly soon as sight
I be and I be big and be 'nough for you,
sauntering senators, poaching paracletes.



Be glad to god again as if you care
against all the scary pleurisies of breath
that keep us to our selves, our sodden selves
taste-worn wintry cabbages dumped
from the noisy squats of rich society.
Be glad to god again as if bright is
and all the thick of you distended

like a swarm of bees abandoning a tree
you are, still selfless stuffed with honey
for me and for me to exact infinity
from the clumsy calculus of time (one
pebble after another until none)
be glad to god again to differentiate
this this from that one and no one sleeps.



The thing I am that is not me....

[These Holy Sonnets begun this morning the fourteenth of November
1993 on a day of warm sunshine that turned later into gentle rain &
mist.]

To know the few things left
abandoned
like the feathers you find
when birds have had a fight in the air
and crows chase hawks until the sky gives out

What is around us is vestiges,
testimonies, inaudible whispers of dead queens.

14 November 1993

(HOLY SONNETS, CONTINUED)

The diminished responsibility of kings
(the man I am) the watershed deciding
all that has fallen and will fall. Picture
a woods almost unpieced by autumn and the sun
comes through it rising o fierce clear saying
I am dazed to understand. Mourn
the unmarrying. Love gave me
some sense of you then let you know me.
Anxiety makes a noise like a string quartet
rehearsing in my ribcage. Not sleeping well
these nights, fears flicker through gaunt imagery
like birds too quick to recognize. The land
I have been given I must rule in my green suit
stiff standing as a bigfoot beech or I fall.



Light through the window of the old barn
with crumpled roof and gaping door and twenty years
it sits in my backyard and I have never entered.
There are things that long to go on pilgrimage
and things that sleep, and weather-beaten edifices
lie thick shrouded in the light itself.
Untamable closeness of things
where touch is no remedy for ignorance!
Who put his house here? Old postcards
show the town with shutters and lawn statues
—Portia rebuking prejudice, Miranda coping with the new—
and deer come homesteading in unseen gardens.
Behind the dozed panes of windows
nobody I ever knew listened to no music.



Sternal agitation, some more so-what?
the body sasses back its boss my aching mind—

who chases it around the desk, blonde typist
in an eternally dismal cartoon. Blond body
of my beast, somber mind of the oldest people,
the clouds roll in on your dumb dialogue.
We get dressed and go home to our wives,
whatever that is, I stare at a black pen
a doughnut two clean milk bottles —one quart
one pint— a nuthatch upside down on seed.
Nothing must be happening if I am free to annotate
the picturesque vacancy of local mind.
You see how frightened of my secretary I am—
I cannot claim this body that I am.

15 November 1993

A small November fly
walks up the screen
as if on his way to die
in some last sunlit corner,
some suburb of the light
that will let him in.

15 November 1993

(HOLY SONNETS)

Imagine it against the light and your morning
Work is done. Imagine the light seep through it
And same time through you, and evening has. Hesper amen.
The day was good, the good was given the gift
Out of mind. Serenity of no transaction,
Only knowing and nothing known. For thee
Dear Mind that looks at me my own
From the friend's eyes. Who shows to know.
Time is the answer. The lonely body
In a sea of flesh is one part question
And one part house on fire in the first cartoon—
The deer watch in horror what streaks past
Scorched by imaginary flames. All
thingliness is fugitive. Nothing slows.



A woman with leaf shimmer on herself
A rubble of light descending makes her visible
And I supposed her too to be my mother and a tree.
For all distractions had broken in the night
(Not vanished) and all materials renew
Their properties in the furnace of desire.
Until wanting is philosophy enough. End
Of the road. Time for time again. Orders
To fill. Destinies in a cracked shell. Dawn.
What has to be done is milk this lovely fire.
Give yours away. Let theirs become you
Till you look in the mirror and see only them,
The years have paid your toll for you, go now,
Break into small shivers of light that know me.

16 November 1993

(HOLY SONNETS)

Have I turned and what is it to turn
Isn't it and invitation in the fibers of
As ink spreads through wet paper
A smear of personality over our white news.
From the hidden world the information flows
Turns this minute into memory, leaves
Apologies for being me all over town
At chubby doorways and by waiting beards.
We are travel. And we go with different speeds.
Sometimes it happens that we meet— the line
Of previous walks each future step
Even if who never glances. What do
And what stop doing — nothing else to know.
And try to be home when the neighbors call.

17 November 1993



Knocked down by omens the ticket brokers
Reassign your seat. Under the eagle
Not the bust of Verdi. The overture
Has been playing forever and the curtain
Seems to be trembling but it might be your eyes.
Outside, snow is falling on the postcards
But it is noisy there too, footfalls and flower girls
And lonely long black cars. Will you understand
It when it does begin? Will you be distracted
By the beauty of the people up there so pink
Wandering around in light? Will the tunes
Take you to that all too private place
You came here to leave back home?
Close your eyes in case you're all alone.

18 November 1993



And if they did not listen would I not speak
Freer and more suitorly, sweetening the sun up
As if I could and healing the hidden fire in grease
To warm your hands so —by that— suddenly you know
Someone is speaking? From the heat in your hands
From the moon on your fingernail, tell, tell.
Until there is all telling and nothing told.
Then you are the story, and cast no shadow.
Short of breath you still catch up with the light.
But they are listening. I thought the myths
Were all inside but when I speak you hear them,
My obvious mistake. Out it, out
With the holy business, heart scraps and hopes,
I wrestled with your enemies till I was one.

19 November 1993

TURPENTINE

the Terebinth again the bitter
knowing that deserts do to their beasts,

do in them as they wander beating the sun

between earth and the back of the sky
a crane crosses the sun

a high sharp thin kind of smell
like a word misspelled you wonder later

and it wakes you at night
mistake after mistake
your chest of drawers is some kind of animal
the wind is your wife calling

and with a smell like that around the house
you know too many dead people

but there is a house, and furniture,
and bitter juices that keep wood from rotting

and you're nervous, you keep
passing the sun from hand to hand.

19 November 1993



A pack of girls granting peace—
Consolamentum of he-chemists,
Last rites and dubious testament of sense.
They came running when I pressed my eyes
—A myth is ruins, is enough to rules us—
Into the all day long society pumps images
Errors and aspirations — to work through these
And find the way beyond — a myth
Can only happen to a me — one grunts
Noisily in struggling out of chains—
To work against it all your life is not to love it
Though sometimes a wrong love loves the struggle.



The fur of things be kind or animal
I need a morning of not going.
I call myself by the name the mountain needs
—We are identified by place—
By fur in sunlight by a fallen tree
You can rest on and watch the river
—Wind can only talk when someone listens

Did you think she was a babbler
This animal of touch? The storm
Is a jade stone and falls from the sky
Earth is the mirror that it breaks
We are the luck —some good some rough—
That lasts as long as we can see
Thousands of half-moons in a stormy lake.

20 November 1993



All night the clouds wait to be let out: he
Went into the Dark Factory and unpieced them there,
Densed mist into hard frost and this he fused
To waking emptiness by dint of dawn: sun now
In a cloudless sky. If no sheep, no need to shepherd
Them to winter valleys and to summer alps,
No need for wolves. If no clouds, no words
Needed to describe. We move free below, shadow-makers
Making shadows in the sun. Turn us transparent
And the work is done. The evaporation.
Trade it all for salt and throw the salt into the sky.
Usually ending is the hardest time but here
Wind closes our work for us, endlessly giving,
Slamming and slamming the door on an empty room.

21 November 1993

THE BRAZEN HEAD

Guessed surfaces knees progress
Crawl around on map terrain
Bone splint to be a

Devil to people again — leathery
Flower sort violaceous borders
Clustered round Sony

In bad hotels just consciousness
Checks out tormented tenderness rehearses
Bleak fire in red ashes

Since heaven went digital Cross-aiders
Borrowing acre Baphomet talky face
(just means Mahomet)

Labial confusions decode leper Baldwin's
Fugitive realm — I am so sad at all lost skin
All lost Pentecosts.

Irrefutable animal. Broken oracles.
Nations shiver not shown some way
Alamut destinies unherb human moon

Old Man of Salt!

I hear you hear me. You don't need things
Forever. Wars are over also
Split palm tree leaf

Bole intact reverse aggressor sword circuit
Finding insides of tree unspoken scriptural
How like some red

Athwart white shoulders weight of perfume
Oil of Ash what dead decline to hear
Suasions of tune

Telling true because has mouth had fed

On time his ominous arrivals
"Wouldn't it bird

To see all coast some one really trust
Hand holds way from mouth
Some nothing heard

As sit on something warm again or measure
Skin galvanic great basin profundity of clang?
Every fall's in it

Rest poised on crater rim brave baring
Flesh to weird fire? Bonne chance, amie,"
Few sailed direct

Most hugged a literal sense of where we are
Enigmatic Palestines and steamy bread re-
Dolent zahtar

Nasrany tunes musette you dance to
Tabula Rosa and *You are my spine*
(Hera's Glory)

Conjugate alternate genophores in splendor
Now learn caverns well, beast with slippers
Up Mount Carmel!

Nudging sacred precincts medicine bundle kestrel
Feather peregrine jesses trailing somehow soars
In wind's belly!

bringing you this flower world "mild aquifer
John a gush you comfort brazen bears the light
in forest speak"

Fall of Jerusalem a space for grieving
Sixty nine from no corner counting a shape we make
To banish grief

What works never happens, bird over crimson
Sails seeking Scamander you north'd a quaver
Sweet wrong music

Hundreds of miles! Another burnt borough!
Grass over your head your heels on my hips
At last I plough

New spell in talking terms elemental eye
Purpose falter learn language new you claim
Star-bound sense-weed

Nostoc shimmers on your new-face
Whose child could ask what womb bear me
Better sea such tongue tell?

15-16 February 1991
21 November 1993

I find a small piece of paper
square-ruled
on which I had written once
not long ago
and with my left hand
these words I can just read:

*I never chose the
hill—
I was honest to
the way.*

What could my
hand have been thinking of?

21 November 1993

Before the melody
a word
locked in the bedroom
with no supper

hearing itself
hard. There are antics
music knows
this side of hearing.

And it's not all Schikaneder
greenery and new wine
a mystical stages
trampled by leaf shadows

far from Vienna.
The word beats
in the quiet hands
of lovers busy knowing

and in bird fly-bys
and most in the warm
hands of children
making no sense at all.

21 November 1993
[from notes of weeks back]

for Charlotte, 22 November 1993

All serenity is a slice of sea
always there a level
quiet as salt a mirror
made of mornings

I wish I could wake you with news
wilder than love though love
is fabric is well-made is clean
because it aims

well to find you where and
as you are
and is shaped by what it wishes to find
you compel love to come

(slow) to be fine as you are.
