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SONNET AFTER PUSHKIN’S *Ya vas lyubil*

Maybe I didn't have anything to tell you
now that I've finally gotten to the quiet corner of me
where I wanted for years to talk to you now
and here it is and all I can guess is that you are my past—

not all of it, just the wanting.
When you were you
you were the wanting that was me.
I mean wanting you was all I knew about being myself.

You knew all that — you saw it in my nervous eyes,
cries from the alleyways inside me getting your names wrong.
And now I have no content in such desire

and nothing weighs heavy on my breath to be said.
You know that too. You stopped listening long ago
because you knew I had nothing to say but *Listen!*

20 October 1992
The obsessions
are miraculous
the agency
of gall
    Spree
unseen
dividing nothing

the trees

peacock-faltering
a hand
touching its own

how there hardly
haughty
the keen of skin.

21 October 1992
ODE TO AUTUMN

Awake in plantations of spicebushes
yellow dreaming it is late. It is late.

22 October 1992
THE SECOND YEAR BEGINS

revolutionary, étude

we need new months to love us

our seasons. Begin October 21:
The Months are:
1. Scarlet
2. Grey on the Mountain
3. Yulefellow
4. White on the Mountain
5. Hope
6. Spring One
7. Green
8. Ocean
9. Fire
10. Lammas
11. Forgiveness
12. Gold

You can change any of these but number one.

22 October 1992
FOR CHARLOTTE

he or she will be an elegant prayermaker, and much in demand for both good and evil desires

—Barbara Tedlock, on those born on the day tz’iquin

Let us make an elegant prayer
for this first day in the second year

a prayer with sore hands a prayer
with a snail beneath the pansies

an elegant prayer with horsetails and sparrows
and ducks white ducks on our own pond

wristwatches and shiny paperbacks a prayer
so elegant it slips through the jaws of money

a prayer sexier than the earth a prayer in blue
let us make an elegant prayer

for every day of our second year
prayer quick as sunlight a prayer

hovering over the table like summer clouds
a prayer with roots and mother-in-law

a prayer with clean teeth and a chewed twig
a prayer with clean sheets a mattress

groaning with horsehair and straw
a prayer with radishes with light bulbs

with silk hanging from the ceiling with women on the phone
a prayer with chocolate and limestone

a real American prayer with harmless animals
with carrot wine with men apologizing to mountains

a prayer with no hats on with oakleaves with coal
let us make an elegant prayer for the whole year

a prayer with baskets and oatmeal a prayer with eyes.

22 October 1992
VARIATIONS ON A FUGUE OF FERRUCCIO BUSONI

Now we're close enough to measure it
the Gothic changeling at flesh gate
with a yen for old music — instant
on the arco, a blue of blaze
a bunch of sighs — my eye is tired
of being tried, to read a soft
(something squirrely) grey is due
to inveterate costuming (hiding) so I'm not
surprised at admiration for
the delicate agitation of her breasts
as she moves towards (memoirs
of old feelings, goose-noisy, a chronotope
— where colors live — reflecting passage
when I was "sunlight" and she was salt)
we sat on the floor and felt
pine-needle-strewn of the forest like foxes
in our burgundy recognitions, a high prince
come riding, a damozel requesting, bird
perfectly without moving on Dinas Bran.
Flesh, gate, measure, music — four Gothic subjects
enter (not in that order) all almost at one,
four helmeted knights canter into the clearing
— how can they move so fast in the woods —
and these Gaelic meditators look fiercely up
(fire of compassion) (f-theme, be brave, bare the walls of the city to the nations, you are the gate, that they come in) displeased at these blasphemous stallions snorting near their startled faces and the knights who?ing and where?ing like philosophers up there on their smelly saddles. Whereas the hooves have been in bergamot, and their rusty iron gives off a damp autumnal sheen in my wet morning. Dew. We have cantered dreaming, we come rarely, our lances untargeted, never at rest. And then they fell to who?ing and why?ing again and the meditators resumed the slack-lidded vulture-shouldered pose until the vain squadron trotted off leaving the place of marvels (only here the miracle, only here the Green Lion roars in scarlet sumac, only here the transformation —egg boils— rattles in the tin pot — crack lets out familiar proteins, o we are war). Always the subject ("theme") a little hesitant, footling behind the others, those free ones who are not subject, the ones beside the point (quick acceleration now, the crisis smoking on the scarlet carpet), timorous they are (not even art is necessary, breath)
(art is necessary, is unchained perceiving)
if flesh be gate then who is going? If gone
be measured accurate, isn't it all staying?
(Isn't.) And this fugitive be your music
(alla rustica) enough for dancing
then rest then sweet you please me
soon the morning doth congest with Light
(open now, it is time for your eyes)
(to sleep into daytime — into the dream called waking)
heavenfaring in the shade of sycamore
(down our own road — opposite the pond road
where the woodchuck lives — the dark one
by the wall of the dam — forget the apples)
you are alone my body in the gateless wood.

23 October 1992
In the woods at Clermont
it felt in my legs heavy
on this bright day the colors
as if we had been walking steadily from France
and the two months passed since then
are an ocean we forgot,
time over the passing place.

23 October 1992
Pressed against the wall
an ogre in your pocket
prays that you fall

and in the cool mud of your defeat
will find a delicate
releasement of your shared need

It is like letting go but it is coming to.

24 October 1992
UNDERSTANDING NIGHT

for Charlotte

Measurable, not far, a color
(mallard, grackle-nape, peacock)
between the amber leaves.

Understanding night. We have walked
for hours and the word is said.

Sorrow is a kind of weather
treads us, then. Then it was evening
and mutinous voices from my indoor peasantry
got tired of their disaffection and I was me again,
a small village on the slopes of the mountain
whose mayor or alcalde for all his graft
and boozing kneels down and pray to ancient gods
in the grey cement barracks of the juzgado
and pours out offerings of meal and beer
praying for the living and the dead, praying
for the colors, praying for the sea.

He sees it down there at the root of everything,
the azure moment when the trees shrink back
from all that movement. He sights along it
looking for the ones he prayed to. One
she prayed to. Then there is no mountain.

There is walking, we are together in the neighbor woods
alone with the deer and the ordinary dark.

24 October 1992
CAALENDAR

Don't travel on a snake
even a dog is better
and this broken mirror tells me watch my step
in terms of getting there without much pain
this given loaf of bread.

25 October 1992
PHYSICAL

Breakfast in the body if one is not Mister Leopold Bloom is difficult. Mr. Bloom wears his body inside out and walks through it as through a shimmering market

or I wear my world outside in, in me the Cimmerian coasts or glittering synagogues or these strutting princesses of the quartier.

So I sit and watch light come up out of the maples and feel all this stuff inside me no not feelings but geographies, flags and bagnios and populations and herds of cattle, glaciers, mariachi bands,

not feelings but things felt, feel now the press and lift of them, the touch and squeeze and let go in them, the keep and the wraparound, the cellar and the attic from which you can see Switzerland,

the bruise of darkness in my market place, breast and belly and the rest, and all particular, lily, loin, to every hip its promise, to the heel its ricordanza.

25 October 1992
for Charlotte

The sycamore's a solitary tree
sentinel rare and fledged with light
long after the others sleep into dusk

but only here and there, a line of them
fifty yards apart, cross the stream
bless the stream, land, bless the going.

A solitary traveler in a hasty world.
Yes a hermit tree like thee and me
a white one a stewardship fulfilled

glory-shabby bark, saint among the visible.

25 October 1992
Tenements held them in

used to live close to each other and

ever by arrogant destinies

fingers are locked round bodies of

poor people.

26 October 1992
DARK ROSES

for Charlotte

Dark roses
the small ceremonies
of an immense commitment

the places in us
that light up with natural fire
we can walk
all the way to being where we are

this deep city thing in us
the lights.

26 October 1992
DARK ROSES, 2

for Charlotte

When the rose turns deepest red
just before the curled lip of withering autumn then
in the profoundest folds of it a shadow comes

like a black flower glowing —how?— in herbage.
Then you know that every candle's lit inside
the ship sails home and every window finds its door.

26 October 1992
NEW PERILS AMONG THE LITERATI

My spellcheck wants to make *trobar clus* into Trooper Claus—
a fat man in a red uniform with a grey Smokey Bear hat
coming down my chimney to give me a speeding ticket

**You've been writing too fast** he tells me,
they've got my number on file in Albany.

**And we clocked you in a sonnet with 16 lines.**

26 October 1992
Caught as I am
in the finding, the closed door
that opens only in the dream, what am I
and going to do? The Green Lion
has me by the balls, the Copper
Maiden is ready for me, my hands
are made of water and the Virgin's milk
gushes out of the indoor stars.
You know how to trick
each branch
into bending
back
where the brutes of polis
cannot reach, fetch, break
this train of thought's
infinite measure perched
jackdaw-wise on some uncommon bush
praying for the Flesh Light
to answer the sempitern—
make rise
the thought to tell
now what I,
do.

26 October 1992
Walking in the dark of the moon
what is there that walks with me

the Austrian saint talked about the bats
the subtle juice of them they spray

all through the vacant trees
the waiting, so much waiting,

the sense of room and room
like an endless chateau we move though

going married in every chamber
to the space itself and to us

to us who walk all our lives in some
or other order of the dark this cool grey

vacancy seems sweet the Lord
of Rain is occupied beyond the low

comforting cloud cover from which the light
if any comes down on us

from the shallow suppers of distant cities
small ones like the night itself round here

a no color caught between the stream and sycamore.

26 October 1992