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FIRST POEMS

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FIRST POEMS

answer to deborah richardson

behind every crêpe de chine cloud
there is a gold lamé lining.

Beach Poem

Night calls burst a whisper of boats through fog.
driftwood scatters brushing my feet wondering
where to go; the green cans are empty,
umbrellas, once laughing lay squashed,
their gigantic mouths still mumbling.

Blind eyes lurk on the ocean floor.
sleepily they blink white and dry;
where fish swim to drink silence on the shore,
I hear seaweed battered on the wind.

Still Life

This still life of cups
mocking the table
recurs as a glint of eye
as an ice moon blown
on October's window.

Your thumbs shredding plums;
the skillet where you stand,
back bent, sleek as a cat.
The orange bowls gape
where my laughter sticks,

the teeth edge of it slitting
your voice beating out the inevitable,
each syllable booms hollow,
an echo of broken drums.

I turn, rotating on my axis of knives,
the walls ache, the lights shut,
as you tell me about her.

gentlemen like that

open all doors,
light all cigarettes,
pay the check,
escort you home,
kiss the tips of your thumbs,
lean for your mouth with closed eyes,

in the dark, you could be anyone.

writing poetry

each time
the same wringing of hands
and the thought of pills
or music.

sometimes it's a man
or the sharpening of pencils
that detours us.

more often it is
the migraine
or anger that forces
us to do it.

always saying this
is the last time ever.

THE HUNTER RETURNS ON FOOT

I only remember
feet
that shatter glass

the soft cunning of
toes
snapping weed

the thorny feet of the
deerslayer
tracking deer

I remember it all
in
withering photographs

young fawns that
died
with wooden eyes

frozen in a glimpse
of
shuffling bone

how the hunter stands
watching
his kill go gray

lean stags murmur
confession
shamed at ravage

when those feet do
not
return

they will sing your
death
with thanksgiving

to fat

shedding skin in handfuls,
warm dough, pearly,
i dream it out of windows.

silver in darkness,
immaculate whiteness,
my skin

washes off like colors
or voices dying from
the radio.

soft bed with little tufts of hair,
what magnificent gardens burst within?

What woman hums beneath the folds
impatient with waiting?

The Orange Tent

It squats like a pumpkin,
is harmless with its zippers and flaps
but its fat mouth gloats.

what indolence!
it sprawls like a nude with nothing to do
but remember feet and various sized asses.

how smug it is
anchored there with fat stakes.
it stretches to the trees as if it recognized them.

The rubber sides puff with the breeze,
glutted from some remembered dinner, no doubt.
It sniffs as if anticipating erotica or money.

What does it want if not other arms
and familiar creases?
even the canvas sheds as if it itched
for other people, different years.

a sudden simple song (about love)

that your skeleton fits mine is not enough.
your bones rub me to a chiseled powder.
your touch is electrifying
even when you are not here.

my hair is an aura of questions;
who do you dream behind your eyes?
as if the curve of my pelvis is not enough.

when heat measures its beats across my thighs
it is no more than an aching to be dressed
in skin,

to flow in a milky substance
of honey,
of dandelion wine.

that your skin fits mine is not enough.
your fingers capture my lips
and I am burning for the woman you dream,

that the sound of her voice would leave
me wordless

or alone with a mysterious melody.

The editor says:

These first poems don't make a difference.
They are interesting but they don't make me
cry, yet here's a line:

*O' tub of blood dumped from the sun
how redness wraps the earth*

Now *that* approaches the cosmic!
But this:

*A poppy within me blooms
as rhythmic and exotic as Pennsylvania.*

Now, *that* is women's crap.
Still, you show promise and I'd like to see more
of your work.

When you are about thirty-five, *then* you'll be
able to write, that is, of course, another decade
away. Give yourself some time to fuck whores,
brawl in bars and drink a lot. Then we'll see lines
like:

*The hallways leak piss and soured rags
but her eyes are innocent as easter baskets.*

THE MATCHMAKER'S MISTAKE

If fate had arranged it
the two of you would be together
on that street we haven't walked;

she with her letters,
you with the car,
and rain.

Tonight an otherwise dry sky
stains through the years;

on this road,
blots of another sort
and all our aches are different.

david

nothing sleeps right
the nights he walks

the air hugs a street lamp
or strokes a dead animal's fur

where his feet go
a faint sizzle leaps off the sidewalk

as if his frost
were a fine cut glass melting

he is the moon in reverse
a calling card

in hieroglyphics
or untranslatable verse

the white bird haunting
behind his forehead

flutters its wings like breath

forming unutterable words.

Tulips

stick in the air with nothing to do.
They are receptacles for stares;
one man is in awe of their beauty,
another wants to grab their necks and yank.

Still they remain passive, unafraid.
Even if the wind musters a subversive whisper
they are compliant, they do the right thing.

As for the grass, no one seems to notice.
How it gushes in abundance!
Even now invisible blades of it grunt
against roots moaning with terrible secrets.

BRIEF EXPLANATION

What love did. The beast sleeps,
the apples sit on the window dried and waiting.
When poems yawn the air eats itself
a good void. The shaft of my brain waits

for what you say. I am more like hunger
satiated on tubes. The beast is the curve of
a letter rerouted, it breathes in strange winds,
blinks with button eyes.

Love, say then, that I have written stronger
poems; I outweigh dust, in the crumble of earth
I am a blade hating; or, let me die,
 the pump of blood,
the bullet of heart blasts too deep.

If what I say rides on helium, know it can
be pricked, that the line is empty, what I
pour in the glass bell leaks, my teeth tear
blanks.

What love did. The beast sleeps.
I work to hear the sound of nothing;
the agony has gone deaf, as if each day
were the last poem I'd ever write.

Gardener

(for George Behrman)

Cupped in your hands
I want to stay
as melons scented with
October.

I am over-ripe, blown
full as moons, splitting
to mouth for your

lips. Lift me, my
rootbed swells to meet
your vine.

Here in tender grasses,
I burst, letting my
seedlings grow wild.

For A Friend Who Left Without A Message

Without you I am burying animals,
with you I am digging them up.
There is a hole outside,
today it was empty.

Now the rain soaks through the mound,
below an echo of drops beating a brown bag.
Had you been there to feast on flowers

I would have returned to pack the earth.
When you left no shoe or footprint
I examined the grass
looking for a thumbnail or a split.

walking

two kettles drumming,
a boom of legs in skeletal rhythm
grinding from hip to hip.

between our thighs, skin and silk swishing,
the sound of apples eating from the inside out.
our juice is red, blasts of blood bang bones
beating in feet.

we march on rattling sticks.

when we lock fingers, I think splinters
shooting the sun down.

listen

baby

do you always keep a woman waiting?

i

will not

stand for this

sitting

wondering

what it is

you've decided.

i've got

four pieces of paper

with you scrawled

all over them.

my hands

are smeared with

every color

of your name.

it took me

such a long time

to pick the right one.

come on

poem!

not her house

this
is her mother's house
nothing has anything to
do with her

though
she swipes the sponge
across the counter
as if

she
was planted there.
she has something
stuck around her middle

the blouse
fills her out
no
it couldn't be fat
yet

she's only married five
years and
angry at her ovaries

that
won't produce.
at three o'clock
she wakes him

straddles his middle
and rides until
she's wet
then the doctor will

check
to see if she got it
in right
if it can work

with less pills
and apprehension.

it is dark
in her mother's
house
I can't see the
china she is showing me

nor the patterned silver
or her reflection
already
tarnished
from use.

Winter Song

the trees shedding leaves.
the earth is a rug covered
with hands.

the naked limbs
like bones
clatter in a rough wind.

what I see before snow.
before you and I grow silent
is a thousand tiny windows
smelling of death
each one more quiet than the last.