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~~176~~
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**LETTERS
FROM
MORGANTOWN**

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PROLOGUE

Early morning is the hermit's cave, the medieval
mind, the cell of not:

Clouds of moss and green rivers in the
blue hills, the succubus-owl watching from the
dark sap:

I will not speak to my times.

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ON THE BRIDGE

Grey calls to grey
Across years and hollows,
Ice to moon, lips to breast,
Until nothing is left.
Streets grow darker,
Days grow harder,
Under winter clouds
My eyes search
For mirrors and candles
In female rooms
Irised with desire;
My ears listen for
Trains and rivers,
Music torn from earth
Like fragments of a hangover
That never go away.

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179
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LETTER FROM MORNING

Wax and bone,
Ghosts in the breathlight of half-dreams.
Cold rooms, dark coffee, darker thoughts,
Thirsting for ink and thighs.
Pages swallowed in waves of blue,
Morning a woman half-naked;
I grind cinders deep into my eyes.
Notebooks ache like sexual want,
Ice cracking on the river;
Promises of flesh and words that vanish,
An unopened mouth, half-formed,
Turning away;
As silence falls silver
Poems flare at zero degrees
And stars
Shout like hermits
At the empty streets.

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~~180~~
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THE LAST DARK HUNGER

notebooks scream despair
of all of this all the time

flesh tries to remember light
falling like a tongue lapping

and kisses like moths
disappearing into the woods

waiting for the grey caress
when all the nights rattle

bones/pods/ and moans
drunken sexhermit/I trash

all my poems/I lie
in shitgutters looking out

from the dead caves
of my eyes

hallucinating beauty naked
hovering

cirrus of hair
vodka/breath/and seed-cradle

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HER NAME IS WINTER

I write you in burning inks
In this sleet of Sundays
Filled with the shout-outs of crows.

Ice-light from an empty sky
Drapes the sticks and weeds
In this time of huts,

The grey cells of hermit-
Clerks feeding on
February, rain and vodka.

It is a text of eye-scum
And mucus, dead robins
And black smoke;

Visions of nymphs stretching
Into the mists
Become shots of coal,

Broken off these hours
And swallowed by the lots
And alleys

I walk through constantly.
I hear the voice of a lamp
At the edges of edges:

I am all bone now,
Unmoving I pound the earth,
In silence I scream out jets of marrow.

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182
180

INK & RUE

1.

at 4:30 in the morning
I lie in bed staring

into the dark
as the wind blows

across the stones and waters
of time

2.

she is the wraith of me
the skin of my delirium

her thoughts are moths
her face one half of mine

3.

the streets fester and run
between abyss and abyss

my gaze harrows clouds
and flesh

sparrows turn gold at evening
I spit out everyone's epitaph

BLACK SALT

Hair, river, geese.

I crumble at gutters.
Insane with Sundays.
Doves and bridges rot
Inside me.
Skin crawling

With 50 years of
Pentup desires.

Moss and dew and
snails.
Grey paragraphs

I mutter aloud
All day alone
Not here

The nonstop shouting
In the mind
My rant shatters
Stars and mineshafts

Hangover lusts.
I suck at her
tailbone
Her skin
Cold liquid

In the fey light
Of March, woods
Shimmering
Palatial-gold, ruby-
Lamped emerald stairways
Spiralled with snow
Flowing under
A sky of erotic
Sapphire.

Black and filthy
Streets.
And the silver
Envelope,
The cirrus caress,
The poem.

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SATURDAY/morning

along the roadsides of infinity
vetch/chicory/queen anne's lace
necklaced in teasel and goldfinches
deer stand like the shadows of statues
in the pond-dark woods

SATURDAY/evening

streets wheeze under varicose skies
crows spit gravel
smell of sex and carrion everywhere
silverfish and black
ants prevail
Japanese poems
bass and drum
bring happiness
a shot of rye
brings completion

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TUESDAY 18 APRIL 2000

Below her
the green streets shimmer
and flow
through lilac and redbud:
robin-mother, see me,
I am your lost one.

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RE-VISION

1.

At 5am I
walk out
onto the
porch and
into the
dark empty
street
moon rising
over pines
and silent
houses
nothing but
human
ugliness
everything
everywhere

2.

Back out
on the porch
cold misty
I look up
and down
the street
again and
see the
darkness
filling with
sapphires
scent of
pears coming
from the
pines
where I
see her
beckoning
draped in
lilac
moon rising
as big as
her eyes
out of
elfland

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LIGHTNING AT DAWN

ocean of asters under
the green thunder
of grasses up to her
knees no further

bloodred azaleas
photographed in violet
light a skinwhite flash
of dreamsnow summer's
edge

a darker bird awaits
beneath the eaves
split silk chimera
and mazes of circular
mirrors around her

everywhere flesh bursting
into rain pure lilac
sleep mermaid of the
yard breathing darkness
in and out dripping
the honey drop by drop

into this seance
between rain and eye

IN REAL TIME

Polyphemus wanders alleys and river-banks
eye-deep in girls on Saturday afternoons

seeking some inner place to rest
along with the ducks

dark evenings lower
the home door is locked

walking up extinct streams
excavating the rusted sky

for one kingfisher day
and what is underneath

haunted by roses and death
he passed by her sleeping place

in the silence of a painting
and thoughts of rain

salamanders and clouds are
your kind, nymph, and water

around stones sounding like
the cooing you made

the last time I saw you
a wind passing over dark leaves

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TINY DOORS

At the river
 eating lunch
days turn into symbols

"bridge
 birds
 water"

in the dark glow of mallard hues
at my feet
 a swarm of red beetles
deep
 in the steaming sex of weeds

Under a ghostblue sky
I wait for the hour to end

 words and myths remain
far away

I watch rabbits and girls dancing together

on the other side

 the railroad to Arcturus

~~185~~ 185
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188

POEM

time unwinds us faster each night
let's move / blood and hips / mind
and tongue / while we still can

half ghost already / I'll still
take you / my hands joined inside
/ until they meet / and I pull

myself through / you / until
we explode / into a single cloud/
of glittering deathdust / still /
aching for more / and more

192
192
199 186

DOUBLE ESPRESSO

Hard beats of the rain
Pink shapes behind steamed glass
I drink a somber lyric nectar
And dissolve into trance within trance
Harder and harder
Until I see her
One leg up
White slippers reflected
In the mirror of the moon
Dark-grey streets telescoping
From my forehead
Straight up her spine
Into the ejaculating pineal
Eye

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~~188~~
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THE BLUE RACCOON

A black candle burns in the sky.

I'm old, I'm shivering, I root around
in the stars, sniffing for angel-flesh.

The streets fold in on me
like the wings of imperial moths.

Too sober
Too drunk
I sit by the river for hours
writing with my eye

In the middle of my brain
a million-pointed star unfolds

Mind hung on bone
like a web of dew

Sounds freeze
words like starlings
rooms like moons within moons

Between crickets
light falls like leaves like water

A million lips enclose me

Shimmer of night and green beetles.

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THE HERMIT'S FEAST

The early morning dark
is sheened in silver

like a chemise glowing
in candlelight

the rain falls as it
has all night

wine from two days
ago

has turned to dust

the hypnotic drone of
an airplane flows

it's a strange morning
but aren't they all

mist and streetlamps
and the green doorways

of the trees

the world of honeycomb and
moss and berries

inside you
three months ago

I was on the moon
now I am deep in a cave

of sepia, looking out
through a mole's eyes

watching the wind
in the hair of the nymphs

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2.

Suddenly the rain
falls harder

blowing like wet silk
over yards and streets

its sound on windows
and awnings

the music of quiet
desire in darkened bedrooms

listening, alone
the scent of books

and long dead roses
fills the cells of the air

with ten thousand aching
wishes

I float high
in a glass room

awaiting the dust of
meteors

to fall from her
hair

as the stars flicker
in the wind

soon to be gone
eyes burned out

by black violets
like golden finches

covered by the darkness
of sleep

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~~196~~
1A3

I CAME HERE TONIGHT [part 2]

Once again
to this lamp, her pages
to hear that sound

to write of sticks and glass
the candle of her spine

of this electrum light
in late March

taken from her waist
my hands in her subconscious
darkest pink

plum of moon
at the end of all alleys
gold Atlantis

alone, listening
streets scraping

bones to ether
burning me
to opal-

ash, from the shores
of Pluto

astronaut of lichen
I swim to her

salamander eyes
to begin

that sound
to drown

in her
beneath the pages

the moth-
haunted

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197
194

DEEP RED GLASS

The mornings are dark alleys
Stark and eternal

Hours shrouded in black and dove
Secrets of Tuesday
Buried in the rain

Skin of roses
Ashes of spring rising
Into the lilac spire

From fountains of snow
The lace of her
Glances

Letters opening like cones
Of honey

River-windows in sepia
And silver

Cascading
From the naked arms of April

192
+98
1A5

WOODSMOKE AND CLEAVAGE

I came up from my
burrow
dreaming of mauve
into this open field
under the skirts of mist
to harrow your words
there
to retrieve the
formula
for the lost perfumes
of poetry
at the edge of your
lips
where
I drank dew
from the thistle
and turning
returned
under black waters
to the infinite tunnel
with your secret
for the elixir of
mauve.

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~~199~~
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NOT BEAUTY BUT THE HALLUCINATION OF BEAUTY

By morning
Hard rains had become sleet
By first light, snow
Dreamwhite on hyacinths
Brushpiles trembling with finches
The emerald ghosts of leaves
Sweet with ice

By evening
The eyes glazed
Dreamblue
With snow and sky
Your letter arriving
Sweet with skin and lilac

It's all what it seems.

194
~~200~~
1/7

GIFT OF THE MOLE

1.

from here
I look up
through the lattice
of
mushrooms
to a membranous sun
I can see
all
the way up
into your garden
of eggs.

2.

dig deeper
into me
with your ether-
claws
to the root-
moons
where
cold thunder sighs
I am there
writing
with a mouthful
of pearls
I have sifted
from your pure
female earth

~~148~~
207
195

EREMITE'S COLUMN

Hope is a dim star
in the gold fire of mornings

a ghost with hands
of moonlight

days of tar and lilac
broken glass of Sundays

I blow around corners
an eye on a stick

watching all the guineveres
holding down their skirts

I plant myself in concrete
and scratch my name out

who will unearth me
in the haggard pink dusk

who will open books
of silver velvet

into city nights, comets,
thighs of snow

I live as if in Pluto
planet of ice and night

underground, an owl of coal
in a mine of suns

unscrolling white maps with
sticks, I see eyes there

two pools of words watching me
as I begin

inking in
each miniature world

of golden peacocks
and fans of radiant moon-ivory

unfolding to reveal
her

written in filaments
of sleep

her hands opening and closing
all night long

Earth is the lamp
I cry for

UNDER-TAKER

I am king of burdock
and thistle
rustling in the night

amidst the wetness
of stones
and roots of flesh

I am moonlight on water
ghost of ash
moth of dreams

an ancient mole
hoary with unspeakable lusts
star-drinker
eye-eater

for a thousand years
burrowing
up
through this world
of black wax and ink
toward
the mirror of gold roses

to feast again upon
the silk arms of delirium
her
sleep's embrace

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REMAINS

Years between kisses, face forgotten.
Lilies burn the mornings down.
In the deep cracks of Sunday, a dove coos
from the moon.
From the gutters of this hangover.
I can see your hair falling, through
my hands.
Over the planet of streets;
And here beside me, wine and poems
left unfinished, and you,

almost flesh,
burning down my nights,
leaving only a lily in the shape
of morning.

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204
151

AFTERWORDS

The seeds you swallowed
Morbid as memory

Will grown another mouth
Inside you

Gasping for crystal air
Coughing out moths of flesh

The ruins of the weekend lie
In the mists of early Monday

The sound of the river echoing
The darkness of your mouth

Bloodless, misanthropic,
The shadow of nothing,

I watch the grey bird of evening
Settle again

Like a poem written before machines

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~~205~~
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WHERE

Here: Sunday: deep mist: trees float above the streets
the stars remember

fields of pink at night
who
lost in this vast paper: frozen white

silences become this lamp of poems

skin/gaze
eye/CLOSER

Morning the scroll of eros
the
poetic
intrigue

wind/grasses/sparrows

morning/drenched in roses
Sunday:
deep ash
remembers

a willingness
to be the words
fading from the page

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EMPTY PORCHES

I taste you
 hard nights
in dreams of her
 breast
gold ashes of sleep
 fragments of breath
pines and grasses
 rain and want

I taste you
 bitter streets
in dreams of her lips
 pink fire
of dogwood
 cold blue moon
of death's icy shadow
 passing into kitchens
everywhere

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207
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POST SCRIPT

Books are closed, lamps blown out, days begin
and end in concrete,
in the mist and darkness of Morgantown,
Monday after Monday, bitter, wasted,
spitting out gravel,
I pull the covers up, listening to the
rain,
getting old in the night.

[back cover copy]

"Better than television"
--Harry Morris

I AM THE TOWN-CRIER
DEAF AND MUTE
WITH BROKEN TONGUE
AND BROKEN BELL
THE STREETS
ARE MINE
TO TERRIFY
WITH
SILENCE