

LEDGER

MONDAY

Still more than half asleep,
I watch the rain through
The kitchen door window
Beating at grass and trees.
My hands are empty at my sides;
A life washed away with the mud.
Not wanting to leave this house,
Now or ever.
I pull on my hood
And enter the rain.

STATION

Winter cries out its last,
A sheen of words on my eyes,
Gold and frost.

Under the blue river of the sky
The waxwings fly from maple to spruce,
Sleek, beautiful,
Beyond all tiresome, human ways.
Our souls go with them
In their hidden redness.

We follow our path
Past weeping cherries
And the rotting pink of magnolias,
Toward distant cicada-song,
The falling glass of streams,
Into the thousand year old dreams
Of evening.

SUN OF GLASS

In the cold silences of April
 There is a knot of ice,
 A hole of stone.
 I pull my boots on,
 I begin again,
 I am dizzy.
 The trees strain,
 The winter rash remains,
 A red frost on my leg.
 From moment to blank moment
 I tremble and do nothing.

51
A

COMA

Pupa,
Forever unhatched.
These few words breaking out
Of your dark integument.
Buried with stones and stars
For a million winters.
Waiting all this time
To breathe in the cardinal sun.
Always in this dark place.
To emerge only into death.

A YEAR AGO

I
Red leaves, mist.
The empty lawn chairs
Sink into the long unmown yard.
On the back steps I mutter
Under my breath to the asters.
A blue frost is on the sun,
Nighthawks gather in silence.

II
Ironweed,
Lighting the dusks
At the far edge of summer.
Husks begin to enclose us.
Voices rise from the early-
Fallen leaves: wind,
Dead bark, nothingness.

III
Cocoons darken our hands
With webs of melancholy.
This suicide music,
Black water under the bones
Of hawks and lilies.

EUCCHARIST

The light of your bread
Rises from this cup of ashes
And breaks in gold waves
Over our fingers,
Covered with the honey of evenings
That overflows from the darkening
Fields.

With it,
We drink
The dew of stones,
A night-cooled water
That bears us up
On the white songs
Of the crickets
That come to us
From afar
To share our gleaming crusts.

PRELITERACY

When the moon
Is in the spruce
All words repeat
Themselves
Once
And fall apart
Into the time
Before sound.
The lonely summer
Winds blow the
Bird songs away.
A tongue of stone
Moves slowly
Through the evening.

NEVER

In the black woods
 The luna moths
 Fall to dust.
 With sere eyes
 I watch the night,
 I drink the bile
 Of childhood memories.
 O my fields
 Swallow me
 In what I never
 Had.

WIFE

Your well of blood
Swallows my pure thirst
For death,
Entombing me
In the sun's mouth,

Out of which
Your thighs stream,
White as the flames
Of Time.

Engraving the afternoon
Light
With invisible, indelible

Signs of love.

NINETY-FIVE DEGREES

Flowering chestnut and catalpa.
The river opens its mouth
Until we can see for miles
Into its steaming guts.

The stream beds rust
And hold out their arms,
But there are no gods.
The sere unending drone
Of the cicadas splits open
The trees. At night,
Strange white beings drop
From the gasping branches
To drink the dust.

Our fingers crumble
Into the rasping green evening.
The granite angels kneel
To lick moisture
From the eyes of the newly dead.

58
n

HERALD

A crow flies through the backyards.
Its color is the soul of the sun.
It brings the taste of autumn;
White weeds, carrion, foreboding winds.
Its shadow is here,
On this June dawn,
Shouting from the grass.
It brings summer
To our feet;
The leaves begin
To sing their falling;
Its caws are the final
Translations of my words.

MESSAGE OF HOPE

The screech owl's call
Is vertical: a tower
Rippling in the mist,
A door of oracles
Hung between night
And dawn that opens
And shuts softly
In the white places
Of sleep.

You waken me, just
As it opens. When
It closes, we are
Where it was, and we
Are gone, deep and
Finally, into the
Landscape only the
Owl can sing to.

WINDFALL

Stones floating in
Light,
Lichens moving
Through centuries,
Eyes turning black
And russet,
The god of the woods
Drumming.

Sounds of rain,
Blue and silver earth.
My face remains
Close
To the moss,
Invoking moons
And salamander
Breath.

We return
To evenings
Clear and silent,
Endless,
Green bells rising
From the thrush-cities.

SUMMER LAMPS

The moon-crown
Of your sleep
Lights all the
Things I cannot

Give you,
The emerald sap,
The castle of the owl's song,
The stone lace of evenings,
The blue crystal of the night's waters,

All the lore that can be read
Only by the music of insect lamps.

And this moss,
Which we grow on our brows,
The deepest prayer
Our hands can fold into,
Changing us slowly
Into the images
Of the poem.

SURVIVAL

The words of nighthawks and
Crickets mesh;
Orb of water,
Green tongue,
I plunge my arms
Into the paper.
Soundless, waves of
Ink wash over deep sleep.
Underneath everything
I lift,
Centipedes and beetles
Are creating the world.

SISKINS

Rain on my hands,
In an unknown time and place,
Trying to hear a still undreamt-of
Silence.

Black clouds floating
By the windows,
And your face in husk-light,
Where weed-fingers drink
The river's darkness
In winter's echo.

Streams of rose running
Through pearls,
Lace-shadows falling
Through dusks of gold,

And in this ether of stars,
Gossamer voices
Calling your name.

PLAINT

Chickadee,
Your whistle
On dawn's threshold
Is the beginning
Of this earth.

First light falls
On the silver maple,
The emerald tamarack
Soft as flesh.

Words,
Become unwritten.
Become stones
In the garden,
Mirrors of realness,
Leave the pages,
Blank out life.

Chickadee, whistle.

SPRUCE

If I stare at the tree long
Enough,
Through every evening
For the rest of my days,

You will be the blue darkness
Flowing over my roots,
My silent mist
In a cat-haunted morning,

You will be the moonlight
On my branches,
The breezes on my green face,
The cupped breath of the siskins
Deep in my crumbling heart.

~~8-8~~
15 66

ACCOUNTS

1.
One cricket, one crow,
One white rose, all dying.
Bones, dry weeds, dark phlegm.
I gaze into the depths of the hours,
I see nothing.

2.
Cold dreams return, scarlet hands,
A pile of leaves, smoke.
A lone killdeer cries out
Across the green emptiness.

3.
The shadow-bells of time
Toll deep in the breath
Of the September hours.
Beneath the night,
Grass windows open
Into cells of stone,
The darkness of snails,
Cemeterial faces.

4.
My voices call back to me
From inside the trees,
The last katydids chanting
To each other across
The vast spaces of the planet.

TIME-BRANCHES

Hands, feet,
Cannot be roots.
My brain howls
For the stars,
For the rain-
Drunk grass,
The narcotic
Snows.

Eye of pod
And tuber,
Nectar of
Autumn, the
River turning
Gold, once,
In the evening.

The great trees
Leave their
Trunks open,
And long fingers
Of amber reach
For our faces,
Promising the
Emerald of silence
For our tongues,

The million-year
sleep from which
We will awaken
Into the last birth,
Ascending from
Blood-tides
To be moons,
Watching,
Opiating
The hills of
Distant planets
With the ever-
Lasting dream
Of emptiness.

MUD AND ETHER

Down where slugs lay
Their diamond eggs,
Down where centipedes feed,
Down where grubs sleep
In great silence

I dig deeper and deeper
Into earth, life, darkness.
The words turn inside out,
Revealing a beauty that excavates
The eyes.
The world turns white
Beneath these cataracts.

I can see nothing
But roots and stones.

INWARD SPIRAL

Dogs bark in the darkness.
A coal train crawls along the river.
You still sleep,
Encoffined in dreams.
I go to the backyard
And eat the dead crickets.
Cold stones suck grey blood
From my veins.
Undines scream beneath the barges,
Trees wrap their claws around me,
The morning opens,
A wet, blind eye that watches
From the bottom of emptiness.

CURSE

Each evening
We return
To our hut
And listen
For what we
Heard in the womb---
Bird skeletons moving
In cellar-moss,
The moon sinking
Into our backs,
Winds oozing
Through the blood
Around us.

In this hearth-season,
Voices of shadow
And ice appear
In the black skies,
Descending slowly
To the raw hills
To cover us
In spells of stone
And snow.

The words too late
That would have
Stopped our births.

ELECTRUM AND AMBERINA

Woodsmoke,
Full moon,
Air of russet
And burgundy.
Dreaming of smoked
Scarlet,
Pheasant dusks written
In the iron fields
As hands reach back
Into summer
To steal the cemeterial
Mimosa.
Now the titmice
Sing, the inks of
Autumn swell,
Gold-edged leaves
Stir around our faces
Telling us
There are no mysteries,
Only this umber music
Of decay filling
The October nights.

IN THE LIBRARY

The drowning lamps,
The violet breath of ice-tapers,
Fingers illuminating the page,
In bone-hours, in word-humus,
In winter flesh.
The fingers, the hands,
The arms painted gold,
Everything goes under
This cold music,
The poems inhale themselves,
Becoming lungs of crystal
Pulsing
In the mortuary of dawn.

THE SECRETS OF POETRY

The black envelope,
The star vessel,
Gold light without shadows
Falling out of the stones
Onto the garden under water.
All of the insects sing there,
In perfect harmony.

74
21

VESTIGE

Everything
Must be turned into words
Or there is nothing.

Even then, there is little.
The smell of bones rotting,
Ink evaporating at the pen's nib,
Paper becoming dust beneath my fingers.

The words survive, somehow,
Barely written, glittering and futile,
Buried in the pages,
Gilded beetles caught
In jars of silence.

But life must be written,
At any cost,
And the arm moves back and forth
Restlessly,
Trying to become
A reptile in the stones.

SATURN IN MOONLIGHT

The dissolved words
Reshape into whiteness
From the ash of light,

Re-inhabiting the absences,
Taking the silence,
Making a new level of time

In which there is a
Reflection of the shadow
Of the former letters,

The uninked pages
Of mist at night
Telling themselves

This is the way
We are written,
Sinking into ourselves,

To become unheard voices
At the vanishing point
Of breath.

THE UNWRITTEN

There is no word from anywhere.
There is a spore of light,
The edge of a rose petal,
A nighthawk's call from the stars.
A garden of mist
Filled with mantises.

No beyond,
No within.
There is a depth
Of bone,
An infinite echo of blackness
Across an eternity
Of white bridges.

No phrase,
No word.
An unknown hand
Moves across the page.