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The Birth of Winter

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Introduction

Katya de Becerra

Not today

Just not today

This evening is possessed
By the violent rain

Not today, please

The temple has not yet become
Our mausoleum

Don't throw your brushes away
Don't burn your best paintings

Just not today

This strange victory
Of space over time
Silence over a voice
And height over distance
Amidst a thousand of bell-towers
A lonely tune gains force
And soon, the scale will break under
A feather's weight

Our city is burning
And the unfinished temple stands dark
In the flames
Our park bench is dying
From the stabbing wounds
Whilst keeping faith
In the wooden paradise

Blurred out words flow over the edge
Movement consumes stillness
Emptiness is filled with rapturous roaring
Of the crystal bells
Take this immortality away from us
Cut these stings

Not a single circle will disturb
The surface of the great puddle
Just not today

Let the mason finish his supper

Strider Marcus Jones

VISIGOTH ROVER

i went on the bus to Cordoba,
and tried to find the Moor's
left over
in their excavated floors
and mosaic courtyards,
with hanging flowers brightly chameleon
against whitewashed walls
carrying calls
behind gated iron bars-
but they were gone
leaving mosque arches
and carved stories
to God's doors.

in those ancient streets
where everybody meets;
i saw the old successful men
with their younger women again,
sat in chrome slat chairs,
drinking coffee to cover
their vain love affairs-
and every breast,
was like the crest
of a soft ridge
as i peeped over
the castle wall and Roman bridge
like a Visigoth rover.

soft hand tapping on shoulder,
heavy hair
and beauty older,
the gypsy lady gave her clover
to borrowed breath,
embroidering it for death,
adding more to less
like the colours fading in her dress.
time and tune are too planned

to understand
her Trevi fountain of prediction,
or the dirty Bernini hand
shaping its description.

WOODED WINDOWS

as this long life slowly goes
i find myself returning
to look through wooded windows.
forward or back, empires and regimes remain
in pyramids of power
butchering the blameless for glorious gain.

feudal soldiers firing guns
and wingless birds dropping smart bombs
on mothers, fathers, daughters, sons,
follow higher orders
to modernise older civilisations
repeating what history has taught us.

in turn, their towers of class and cash
will crumble and crash
on top of ozymandias.
hey now, woods of winter leafless grip
and fractures split
drawing us into it.

love slide in days
through summer heat waves
and old woodland ways
with us licking
then dripping
and sticking

chanting wiccan songs
embraced in pagan bonds
living light, loving long,
fingers painting runes on skin
back to the beginning
when freedom wasn't sin.

ON THE TRAIN TO EL CHORRO

on the train to El Chorro
something cut me loose,
and i left this tomorrow
of my youth-
in the twilight of a lake,
in the sky mountains break,
rock chasms of echo and truth
brought me to young olive groves,
standing like soldiers in sun-starched rows,
ripe for some buyer and vendor
to trade them
and train them
so profits accrue-
in the style of Milo Minderbender
dealing in Catch 22,
when women loved like floozies,
and sat at the back at the movies-
showing me what to do.
time turned each page
of idealism's rage
into cynicism's age-
on each point of winding track
as i thumbed back
through the book of that tomorrow
on the train to El Chorro.

FADING SPHINX

another beautiful eye
reflects lifes lie,
when you look into its face
and see a better place
close by.

without that circle round its dream,
everything is seen
to separate unequally in two
and drift apart blown through
old sky.

the why, where and when
does not matter then,
as it dissipates
into other fates
making old orders die.

in all the residue
of what we knew,
a fading sphinx, casting contemporary
shadows, rises, temporary
but still drops by

elsewhere, in the flawed foundations
of younger civilizations,
building their own
mountains of shaped stone
where polished lenses spy.

OVIRI (The Savage – Paul Gauguin in Tahiti)

woman,
wearing the conscience of the world-
you make me want
less civilisation
and more meaning.

drinking absinthe together,
hand rolling and smoking cigars-
being is, what it really is-
fucking on palm leaves
under tropical rain.

beauty and syphilis happily cohabit,
painting your colours
on a parallel canvas
to exhibit in Paris
the paradox of you.

somewhere in your arms-
i forget my savage self,
inseminating womb
selected by pheromones
at the pace of evolution.

later. I vomited arsenic on the mountain and returned
to sup morphine. spread ointments on the sores, and ask:
where do we come from.
what are we.
where are we going.

HE PLAYS HIS FLAMENCO GUITAR

he plays his flamenco guitar
knowing who you are,
seducing his singer
to bring her
from bleak harbour masts
to his contrasts.
he knows the equations
of her close flirtations
and doesn't judge her glances
for wanting what romance is-
vibrating in voices and strings
of fornicating feelings.
her prose photosynthesis
illuminates his
shades that colour mountains
and drops of wishes in mosaic fountains-
she loves the Picasso from his pen
and horse smell like Andalucian men
her reversed body senses
inside his defences-
as her sea wind
billows in his revealing
Avalon through the mist,
sweet loved, firm kissed.

Alan Britt

JUST ANOTHER BELA BARTOK POEM

Hoofbeats or guitar notes?

How would I know?

I'm not a mind reader.

I can't read my own mind,
much less the minds
of adolescents
addicted
to common myths
about love and death.

Could be hooves,
with thick, opaque toenails,
or it could be death
deciding which bureaucratic robe to wear
to Mr. Flood's pool party on Northway Road.

Remember, the law of averages
that fashion evolution
reminds us that we narrowly
escaped butcher knife claws
and paranoid antlers.

But what about music
as it once was,
as it appeared to us
when we weren't expecting FBI raids
crashing our frosted jealousies
and slashing our tropical fronds?

Just about when the butterfly doors
of a '58 Buick first resembled a pink cocoon.

Just about when a lazy pancreas
first resembled an oyster on the half-shell.

Still, hooves like alphabet blocks, trimmed in pale,
chipped yellow, blue and mint green tumble
over wrought iron balconies, blazing as they fall.

ROCK OF AGES

Fling your black & white Rickenbacker
across the Atlantic.

Shift your focus to folks living in harmony,
scrubbing each other's privates, fur lined
& white knuckled for a showdown with truth,
the ambiguous one, the one guaranteed
to put something in your drink, the one who
haunted Mary's chambers in search of Superman,
ears pointed to the sky but feet firmly planted
onto a firma not yet invented but coming
soon to a theater near everyone.

Pound shrapnel into platinum fish.

Tune one string to the east causing gypsies
to exterminate lies from our veins.

Pat the cat, you're the master, now go on,
shovel stars, comets & other fragments
of the big one onto your garden, mulching,
as it were, cultivating sensibilities capable
of navigating this cesspool of logic we covet,
numb to many possibilities for every possibility
beneath the sun: schools not embarrassed
to tell the truth, schools willing to exhume
deceased love affairs, schools that survived
the Blitzkrieg & returned with the fury
of rotten apples in a wheelbarrow glazed
with tepid rainwater, glazed with feelings
for your pastor, glazed with pheromones
during a thunderstorm tempting, pheromones,
not the storm, but tempting childhood with
an adult thriving inside bipedal vegetables
known as us.

Each of us has each of us inside each of us
while the earth swirls her tapestry
called survival, nature, truth or god.

Each of us has each of us inside each of us
giving birth to promises from the grave.

As 10-year-old Duane once said, *Fools make gods
& only trees can make trees.*

I see elms' tiny fists; I see alligators trolling
childhood canals with little leaguers creaking
hemp ropes knotted to mangroves wading
waists deep into the swamp of faith.

I see what I want & don't want, what I want
but not so much as I'd like for my penultimate
effigy, that is, a farewell on this planet to every
human united by truth.

JOHN DOE

(A.K.A. John Duchac at the Ditch Mansion)

What John Doe said when he
knocked on heaven's door.

Her majesty's mansion.

So what?

What John Doe said when he
wasn't fingering Warsaw whisky
glasses lining ebony cabinets.

I say what John Doe said before he
got lost in whatever he got lost in—

But John said it, & I believe he
meant every fucking word of it!

COME IN, SPOCK!

How do you mind-meld with a fanatic
without ignoring all other fanatics
in the world?

How do you sop biscuits one dawn
& swizzle olives another?

How did you become omniscient
when the rest of us weren't looking?

Or, *when* did you, & that could be
half the problem, rhetorical nonsense,
oracle snake-oil off the tailgate
of a mud wagon dressed
up as a highly respected
disrespectful politician.

Still, that begs the question:
how do you mind-meld with a fanatic;
you can't do it alone; you must first
gain the cooperation of fanatics
all over the globe & pretty much
at the same time; otherwise, I'd say,
you're pissing down faded asparagus
boarding house shingles
from once regal Hyde Park, Tampa,
circa 1953, so on & so on.

MATCH RACE

She's a filly but she knows how
to hug the rail, like filing her nails
& shifting gears when tempers
flare the final turn crowded into
fourth but tired of waiting
snatches the remote possibility of love
before racing the herd into darkness.

I offer polite applause while cinching
my future to a 50 to 1 shot with
Appaloosa rings tattooing my naive
expectations——if only, if only
she sprinkled more pepper into
the salad & agreed that coming
from behind had its advantages.

Darren C. Demaree

MAZZA'S VIGNETTE #40

The third time Senior told me that he had lost his virginity in the house my mother was living in, he had a scar running down the top of his head from the operation, and I was so happy that he remembered that story. I let him tell it forever. I let the details come to him like gifts. I let him get hot and excited about the whole ordeal, and when it took a minute for him to come back to the present, where his body and mind were failing, I said nothing. I let him drag his heels from that epic turn of youth. It wasn't inappropriate or weird at that point. It was a sad and lovely moment. He called me my father's name, and he walked away without another word.

MAZZA'S VIGNETTE #41

You cannot sully the already sullied. The piling doesn't take. I drank. I got high. I tried really hard to get laid in the bathroom. I ate horribly, beautifully, like my body would be glorious forever. I left a trail there, but there was no way you could pick it out of the many, many trails left on the runner to the layered exit. There was a commercial pizza joint across the street, it must have felt as useless as Eden from that clean corner.

MAZZA'S VIGNETTE #42

Slipped to gasp, if you didn't know Junior was coming to work dressed like Elvis that night, it would take you a good thirty minutes to get your head wrapped around the event. I was a fan of Junior's Elvis. It made much more sense, him as that character, than any other version. The rest of the time, even when he was being a good guy, you didn't believe that this was a life where he would walk away whole.

Jonathan Beale

They say those things

They say those things
As the stumbling child learning - fails to be
In their solopstic parents nobility free
A study will prove
That the infant wants and desires are
To learn to excel in this student bar
Until the angels move
To excel in their glee

Awaiting some king of epiphany
The biblical loses of the infants' misogyny
This may or may not prove
The student of infant truths'
Or as they - as Old Nick the horny hoofed
They claims above intelligence
They dream gratis days before they charge a fee

Days pass into the long toothed evening
As they hear their youth grow. They madly sing
Their errors cannot be proved
The titans stand up against
The errors their – at the end of the day
They in lust lie of love
Admitting to none to no one not even *me*

They write the blurbs & C.V.s for each other...
Each in their labour glories never to shirk
This the truth and is proved
From infancy to adulthood
What would be, and what is should
They must move love above
Ruing their errors over afternoon tea.

Statute States

Statute states represent
Some cold hard rules that are
only know when the trout
Breaks the surface

- The fly is caught
- Blindly behind
- King in world
- Not in another

Lines made to shape the poor
To be – kept aloof – keep afar
And the flip rich - to keep them there
We admire the mistakes that leave the mire
And adore the adoration of the poor
We must worship the errs of the past
And see just how long it is before
We slip (as we must) along and to dire straits
The only real outcome. Straight to hell
Arch to Eden's own lust's un-cemented vistas
Stick to the rigidity that most can never touch
To the raw mass – the unimportance is too much
Up on the plinth - death remains an insight
It will lay in the the grease to draw inwards
It will, it will, it must and again,

*Fist on breast we remember what is best
From what was the worst
The eyes tell from they who are left
The loss from last to first*

The cold monument focuses
Our optimism
And share a grief
Blind as lemmings
Fool as dogs
Lead to lies
Take death as your duty
Almost your career aim
Some foreign finger

Fight the mental storm
Leave the snared word
Place away ahead ahead
The mole may slip passed unnoticed

Once before - light was known
Something other found,
Finding, what is found
what it is to be
What is to be
something other.

The Green Man

Raw from embryonic state of want, want to breathe, want to eat, want to live

HERE I AM!

I am the green ma.a.a.N!

The innocents had learned to mutter.

Returning back

Arriving back

As salmon return

Same lot, same place, same time

A silent magnet awakes

Almost a biological – mode – to become

A psychological change to-

We drew up around 11.00ish

Drinks laid out; a mosaic

Of beer, wine, Pimms'

We saw lines of food after some Egyptian famine

There, scraps of convenience and ease.

Had picked Heath-Stubbs and began to reread

The lines that had held me in youth

And drew me to the clouded myth filled sky aspiringly

The hearing boned sky lining the route

From Clapham Junction to Streatham

And back.

Ramesh Dohan

Poetry for Dummies

You have to
structure your day
have a routine
be set in your ways
keep everything
in order
file your feelings
and your fingernails
flex your muscles
and your options
Memorize tacky affirmations,
and slogans
on your refrigerator

At the movies

At the ticket window, I won't follow
the body of the usher as she leans
to break a twenty with a press
of cash register and chest. She'll tear

my ticket and pass twelve-fifty
beneath the glass, steering me
past the snack bar where two rows
of candies in loud yellow boxes

will glow like lines on a highway
and lead me to my seat. The previews
will warn R for restricted, S for sex
and V for violence, and I'll remember

the V-neck of the usher's sweater
and the fainter V drawn by her breasts.

September

The sun is as resolute as a bookmark,
or a dog-eared page, dictating: *here*,

the remembrance, and *here*, the fear.
How can I say it? All morning

I observe trees unravelling through the kitchen window,
their leaves dropping burnt and ochre,

each one a five-fingered impression
or a fluttering heart.

G David Schwarz

On The Song Of Solomon

On the Song Of Solomon
Here was my big test
Will I remember anything
Besides the woman's breasts
Now I think of red wine
Said to be good for the heart
But here again are those breasts
So I suppose I must just flirt
O I praise King Solomon
A poet and a warrior
He had bit a dozen
Women to do the no-no

I Would Like To Hug You

I would love to hug you
My arms are open wide
Just take a big step
Right straight inside
I would like to have
my cheek against your cheek
pressed so tight
that we can't even speak
but then words won't even be needed
only four great arms
And I'll put two around you
and we can sing some songs

Chapters Without A Book To Go To Or With

What To Do While Standing On The Corner
Laughing Out The Side Of My Head
Packing Up The Stomach Virus
Big Old Laughing Roy Is Long Dead
Thinks To Study In Bed
From Birth To The End
Get protection
In Casablanca What Is Mentioned
You First Day As A Dog
Take The Wine From The Bottle
Lets Drive Out To Bishops Gate
You Stand On The Throttle
I'll See You In The Future
Alabama New Girl
Dreaming To Alaska
Up Into The Past

Charles Cicirella

Unvarnished

(For Julie)

Permeating.
Devotion.
Outpouring of charity.

Matriarch.
Mother Earth.
Mother lode.

Serious contender.
Academy Award winner.
Permanent magnetism.

Wordsmith.
Innovator.
Inpouring of thermal energy.

Another Poem About Bob Dylan

I hear him pleading.
Pleading like an American.
Pleading like a human stain.
I hear his reckless chitter-chatter.

And I am blinded.
Blinded by his supernova sensibilities.
Blinded by his intellect burning a hole in the sun.
I am given new eyes to see when he punctures the skyway.

Another train car smoking down the tracks.
Another troubadour freed from their Houdini chains.
Another Gemini trickster spoiled by the duality of their sins.

This junkyard medicine deserves a special place in Heaven.
I was born a poet and someday I'll surely die a poet - what's it to you?
Take me for a trip upon your magic swirling ship.
I'm ready to join this circus and get the hell out of Dodge.

These Words

These words are lumberjacks, and I intend to cut down all these trees in my path.

These words are serial killers, and I intend to kill anyone who veers off the path.

These words are jumping jacks, and I intend to hold onto these childish things for as long as they preserve a path toward righteous indignation.

We wish, stumble and crash.

We plot, scheme and pray.

We win, lose and draw.

These words are blanket reminders of what once was, long before God jumped ship and Christ was handed a raw deal.

These words are burnt offerings from another time and place when the past, present and future were locked in the same cell and a skeleton key was swallowed by a great whale.

These words are beta blockers keeping you alive just long enough to face the inconvenient truth that no one here gets out alive.

We piss, moan and vent.

We howl, cackle and roar.

We descend, drop away, and go downhill.

These words are stowaways, and I intend to make a break for it as soon as I find my sea legs.

These words are coordinates on a map and I intend to pinpoint Shangri-La before I am consumed by all these lost horizons.

These words are bullet points in a PowerPoint presentation impressing no one and getting me no further than the next fork in the road.

Mother Revisited

(For Joni Soule)

Silence breaking.
Suffering this life.
She paints and dies.
She lives and cries.
We break apart.
We fall like dominoes into an unmarked grave.
I love her.
But that does not change anything.
I love her.
And that does mean something.
I heard her crying.
She was in the other room, 1385 miles away.
I have this bad habit of constantly interrupting her when we're on the phone.
I don't know if I'll ever learn to shut up and listen.
Yes we're artists.
And no there is nothing even the least little bit romantic about it.
She paints, but I honestly don't know if that sets her free.
She lives and I honestly am not sure what any of this means.
She is not silent.
Pay attention and you will hear her asking for help.

Disembark

We hug human husks.
We hug tree trunks.
We hug celestial bodies.

Be a pioneer and go it alone - I dare you.
Be a patron saint and try and make no mistakes - I double-dog-dare you.
Be a purveyor of human souls and never forget someone else created you - I triple-dog-dare you.

You're not James Bond.
You're not Mother Teresa or Mahatma Gandhi.
You're not the be all and end all of everything and everyone.

We hug naked truths in our undiagnosed states of unseeing.
We hug burly, bearded teamsters in our uninformed states of class warfare.
We hug our children with dirty hands and vulgar mouths in plain view of God Almighty.

Be an iconoclast and go the distance before you're dead and buried in an unvisited grave.
Be a rebel without a prenup and pull out all the stops before you're burned and your ashes are left blowing in the chilly winds.
Be an actual person with thoughts, feelings and opinions of your own before it's too late and your existence is rubbed out like one more unsupervised adolescent prank.

We drove by the corn, and it was dead.
We drove by the church, and it was closed for repairs.
We drove off the cliff and never reached a bottom or actual conclusion we could accept.

You're not Mickey or Minnie Mouse.
You're not a purple dinosaur.
You're not the last bastion of hope for humankind even though you may believe otherwise.

We hug empty vessels.
We hug pipes and drums.
We hug billions upon billions of stars to our sunken treasure chests and are never the wiser.

Avonlea Fotheringham

Ghazal For Something Else Or More

Kick up your heels in the desert, let the vastness of
distance, the astounding yellow roam,
redefine the sun, the air; see for miles across the swelling
good blue sea, perfectly home.

The tumblers would shine through the blueish air, and the grit
and the grime would shine
through the tumblers, and every sigh and every chip of paint
would, too, be perfectly home.

You'll find it heaping in dewy stacks, perhaps pages upon pages
begging for actualization, air, personhood, to be perfectly
home.

And you say we can have faith in each other, that the only
pressure is that of our
own thumbs pressing against our temples when we could, too, be
perfectly home.

The rest is the rest is the rest and nothing more, and nothing
quite so mindful
as all that, but the opportunity—everything withstood—to be
perfectly home.

happy little surprises along the way

the hardest thing is the bottom of the glass,
that I'm spilling all over the floor,
ripping apart at the seams—
how carefully are you listening?
this is a stutter. glaze over me.

here are your hands
on cracked ribs, kneecaps, knuckles;
and if I were to sew anything back together
it would be the button on your shirt,
the hole in your sock.

Speculation In The Shower

Showering away from home is the kind of nakedness
we hate, the vulnerability:
that tub could kill us with one
unexpected slip upon the blind spot

and there is a certain comfort in knowing
the last time you washed a towel;
there is a certain comfort in unforeign soap,
in true and undisturbed aloneness
in the hiding places we make familiar;

and in the streets, and under layers,
(wearing masks or hats or what-have-yous),
only our best selves kissing
only the best selves of strangers,
have we ever been truly happy?

making time for oxygen

your skin would have lit fires,
left scars—stung,
the way my throat swelled up like,
i am not *speaking*—
just mouth-noising.

did i twitch when you
embraced me,
good to put an am to a face'd me—
the way i would have trembled,
wish i'd done it

somewhere within reach
of you, eight cities deep;
wish i would have gone along,
not been so terrified
of being out of breath.

Post Scriptum

RD Larson

The Birth of Winter

Never mind that golden leaf, the one that dangles
 By a single spider thread.
Care not that the flowers have faded and bent.
Worry not that the birds have left forever.
 Feel not the chill of wind from the north.
 We are more, my love.

Never mind that the puddles freeze to silver
 Below the dark, and lofty firs.
Have no grief for the hunted stag on the run.
Wish not for the berries that grew so wild.
Bear not the loss of warm sunlight glinting
 With dim and nameless fear.

Don't let the darkness into your waiting soul.
 For listen to me,
I have the sight to see the future now for us.
 There is more to come, more life to come.
For winter is not the death it seems to be.
 Fear not, my dearest love.

The winter fire will warm you with its glow,
 while I hold you close.
You will have your warm sweater knit of stories,
 You will have your feet covered with words
and sonnets will hang with glory from your ears.
 I am with you, my love, always.

When the tops of the trees cry in the hard wind
I will comfort you.
When the branches fall I will shield you safely.
When ice forms I will hold your hand tight
And when the snow falls we will delight.
For it is anew we celebrate.

I am your lover and you are my love, it's true.
Be calm for I am here.
Winter deals its deck when rivers roar and trees fall.
I will hide you in my arms and pester you with talk
of far away travels and sunny days on beaches.
I will coddle you, my sweet.

The dank smell of toadstools and mulch will hover,
In the midst the ferns
Snows will fall and melt and fall again.
The pious will pray and some will die,
But neither you nor I will join the others
We are earth's children.

As all living things huddle and wait for spring
We will sing and dance.
Many others will harken back to bygone days;
While others will slip into the dark to die alone.
Some like us will survive.

For winter is not the end of joy for those who love;
It is the season to celebrate!
Thanking those we love and want, we praise;
Scorning those who limp away and cry too loud,
Throwing caution to the wind we dance to music
made by our love.

And when the days get slowly longer we grin,
At the fears we hid away.
Wildly gay and running free, we drift
Like the last snowflakes, the last cold
Winds of the bitter north and east,
our heart swelling with joy and life
As we love one another.

Winter is the birth of dreams and cozy joys,
It is the blanket we treasure.
And the game we play again and again.
For winter is tamed by love and love
Foils all the fears of death and damned
As hearts swell in songs of happiness.
You are my beloved.

Winter's Tears

I long to see the sun in glory,
I long to see the beauty
Of the blessed land.

Not to be,

Not now.

For we are hammered again
By the Stormlord
and not even his daughter
can wrest the dark cold
from his grip.

I long to see the fair flowers,
I long to see the young, just born,
Of the blessed farm.

Not to be

Not now.

For we are at war with the wind
From the Stormlord,
and not even his beloved
can stop his ruthless
terror.

I long to live free and laughing,
I long to dance and sing
As if a child.

Not to be;

Not now.

For we are weakening from cold
At the will of him,
And not pleading nor mercy
can stop his war.
Mother Earth is turning
slowly.

We will survive the wait; we will
We shall know joy yet
as if to live again,
To be then,
To be now.
For we are facing down the fear
against the Stormlord
and we have food
and warmth to survive
Somehow.

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COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

Submission and comments should be sent to Klaus Gerken, Chief Editor at kgerken@synapse.net