Poetry

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If You Happen To Find Mariette, Please, Wait To Read These Words Until The Red Sun Swells Through Stained Glass

I.
Laying in liquor canals,
Mariette's wringing petals from torn
strips of storm.

II.
Swastika resting in light on my chest,
Mariette shades the window with flags
of the soil, of the soil,
of the earth, of our atmosphere's lashes
of sun, of afternoon.

III.
From our pale
Mariette's ankles stream ribbons of heat
this evening of waking,
as the sun sets, the waterline tackled by
slow constellations' orange orbs,
for our strippers eat dinner alone.

IV.
St. Elmo's fire crowning
Mariette's wind-thrown blond,
curled into herself
as the saints on our masts long swing lanterns
against the rain wrung from her gown. Mariette
and the storm both left staggering
into the harbor.

V.
Amber jagged against azure,
Marxist red, oceans of canyon,
Pacific and Atlantic one lulling
Thule, dried and dead. Mariette skips the glaciers
like stepping stone to Iceland, still loved
and still lovely, for she was already vast.
"In slow glimmer, the waves disappeared,
silhouette of the storm on my breast."
Mariette faints, and the quiet stays quiet
for a while.

VI.
Broken bones laid by the bridge.
Mariette laid erupting flame,
lighting his cocktail
with eyelashes, fingertips, slow as a lover
over caskets of islands of men,
pale, whose hands had seen poetry
burned and in ash. Ash that today formed a
cloud, sent to reach Mariette's iris. Ash sent
between rising, towards setting bands.
Bands that peeled from the sky and flowed,
ribbons of setting, of rising, to celebrate
hands holding early glass bridges, and
wrap them, blanketing poetry burned.
Did you know, Mariette? The rivulets
of thawed starlight that stream
to your palms
only couldn't let the river die alone.

VII.
Hot orchard run,
Mariette in your roots, made of shattering spaces
of soil whose colors seep up through
branches to drip colors
of heat on the eyelashes, on the eyes
of lost barefoot beatifies caught under
leaves acting like snow, acting like souls
for spring. Their shadows weave words
on the ground as they rise, and they rise
for the words of their bodies. And their words
are spoken by glass sunlight like prisms
avoiding the dream, so I sleep,
yet they still project visions onto my sheets.
"It has something
to do with the view, I think."

VIII.
Armies lay their guns on the edge of the tide.
Mariette, come by night, wash these ruins of ash,
wash this rubble of form,
wash the city of dead.
Wash my fingertips, fires of sands, in hours.
Wash my hands in the kiss of this man, when
you come, who here kisses this picture
and lays his gun down in the earth,
into azure and mountains and distance
and birth.

IX.
Our fingertips met,
Mariette,
and we brought together our palms underground.
We made mountains
wove joy into the hair of all those we call
Lazarus, calling from this corner table to
dancers who mend their own hours on the edges
of azure and the windows of Thule
a while longer.

The Murder of Charon

I.

The Boatman's lover
waits by the window—
they lived by windows, and by signs of the day—

the language of windows
when you feel like it reminds you
of the last time you died—
or as shadows haul time across the room,
peeling the wallpaper,
like silent fingers of the sun—

she waits for the babble of coins
to sound down the street.

II.

Charon's lover had a lover once.
Dead boy of marvelous agony—
Pompii groaned like lava from his lovely eyes.
While combing his hair one night for a welcoming gala,
chatting in Italian, he insulted the Boatman—
once. Found mouth steaming, skin blank, drowned,

back upon the banks of the cruel earth.

III.

They summered in Hiroshima—no tornadoes
or volcanoes or plagues to be found
elsewhere that season.

Who does not need somewhere they can let down
their hair and savor the brush
of hot ash on the wind? Lounging on ethereal
lawn chairs,

sipping coffee, they watched charred bodies
pick through the charcoal ruins and pull
the broken fingers of the buried
until the skin shed off.

She glanced over at him, the same gaze carved in his face
as when, at the airport, someone had asked them,
"Are you here on buisiness?"

IV.

"Come for a swim?"
he asked her with eyes on his breakfast.

She skips across the backs of Heathens,
her feet all but numbing
in the slow black glacial waters—and dashes,
spinning and singing and shining
for the muddled masses mulling around the dock

if only for the sweet scent of long-
forgotten perfumes.

The intoxicating incense of pollen,
sweat and alcohol.

"I think that I'll stay here today," she says,
looking away.

"See to the garden."

V.

The garden in one place is a sandbank,
the shape left after a flood.
Another is littered with burned and bruised rubble.

Still another growls but mud,
like the rim of a geyser—
along the terrace wall—

all are watered by parched winds
scraping through desolate riverbeds.

It's not that nothing grows.
Blackbrush and belladonna seep through
the cracked land. Yet it remains bare,
for to Charon, everything is a weed.

The Gutters Cradle Mount Charleston: Las Vegas 2005

The gutters overflow
with shallow archives
of Mount Charleston's snow

into canyons of streets
growing old, growing
rivers upon rivers of gray
hair and fingernails and bones

that overflow past the vast thicket
of concrete, blinking neon
through nights and days to stare
on dawn and traffic

and pedestrians in rows,
who stagger like Jericho
under trumpets of streetlamps
whose blossoms serenaded
Mount Charleston's snow

as I am dragged by my hair
towards the boat by good citizens,
over gray sidewalk squares

with numbers in their corners,
whose holidays raise them
like stairways leading

to red blinking towers crowning
great gray stems in the thicket of buildings
where preaching beggars read off the names
of streets to coroners

who papier-mâché the walls of ballrooms
with magazines and zigzags,
dipping their heads into dreams brief and bright—

dreams as blond as lashes of afternoon sun,
lashes that come
into the side of my vision through emerald
leaves of afternoon as I stare up being dragged on my back.

Come, beams, into my vision and light
the fountain and square,
soak into my hair, and don't dare

reflect dreams of the good life
the glare and gleam of somewhere

off archives of Charleston snow
as it wanders into skylines
low, pushing up telephone poles,

coldly seeping into valleys and lakes
where boats glide and row
over clouds in the water,

tackled by constellations, slowly
revolving over the edge of the river bank
overflowing, where I walk quiet with my toes

kissing the brim of the waterline,
kissing the water where I walk contemplating
the sighs of stairwells and the rise
of waters and wells tomorrow morning. Oh morning,

when my hands are bound by hands,
when a bell's toll sings like sirens,
like rain's liquid bells to the railways it sings,

through bright eyed black buildings it sings, and
extinguishes visions of hell
with visions of stairwells and eons of sunrises.

Then only deserts and mountains remain
coated with blankets of snow.

Las Vegas, Nevada 2006

Kiss the spout of your sink. Raise your hands
in prayer to the power lines.
Whisper love songs to the telephone receiver.
Together, all at once. We are not alone...
listen.

Today is not a normal day. Tonight is not a normal night. Everything is alive.
The utilities are alive. Drains and pipes and wires and sockets. Concrete slabs sewn
together like a quilt.

The cosmos thawed, beaming rivulets tried to run like ink beside the car.
Who did I meet? What movie did we see? Did we stay? Who drove?
Looking up through a pool, down through a glass ceiling.
Were the lights from the streetlights or the headlights or the Marlboro Lights
or the traffic lights or the billboards? And which, in the dark of the new moon desert, found
the hangman? And did he unravel, and why am I on the floor, and how did I get into the
back seat? And who was I leaning on, visions of Alina blushing on the ceiling? Who was
listening to my conversation with a comet,
of philosophy and why she loved Deleware? And how is it we couldn't find
the bright dew on the silk web
of utilities alive

The morning sun's an alarm clock I can't turn off.
My body's sore, questions scratch like talons
on my skull. Memories drip in the puddle of my head from a broken faucet. Prophet,
we were lost. How late did we find our way back? AM? PM?
"Later still," says the faucet
from deep under the sidewalk.

Written in the Back of Wild Edible Plants of Mother Nature Rented from the Multnomah County Library: Portland, Oregon, January 2009

They'll call anything a rebel
that won't be beaten down
by a newspaper like a dog.

I write this
on LSD
in Forest Park.
It's snowing,
so beautifully. Somewhere bulldozers
roam. You, dear reader,
are somewhere now too, with me,
waiting with the other
hungry children of this blackened Eden
whose weary elders guide
a straw
gently as a feather
onto the back of the Great Camel
whose teeth are mountains,

whose dreams are bird songs,
whose blood is rivers, streams,
whose hairs are ancient dusty trees,
whose skin is the grasses, dirt and weeds,

and whose desperate breaths
are the wandering, weeping rains.

Morning Dreams February 15th

I.

On clear days I see rings of rainbow
wrapping ‘round the heads of animals
crowning them like haloed angels,
crows and cows and ants and swallows,
        the tips of pines, their every needle.
A few rings bloom huge in the sky,
twisting with its windy sighs.

II.

On afternoons my shadow stretches
so long it wraps around the planet
and brings me spices where I’m standing.
But just as I think that it’s landing,
        to whisper at my dreamy toes,
it lifts and glides through my breast’s womb
and lassoes up the rising moon.

III.

On nights I wander through the city,
myriad lights like eyes all splitting
up my shadow, roaming pretty,
twelve directions, always getting
        longer, shorter, darker, lighter,
as rainbow ribbons grace my hair:
the ghosts of those who would be there.

Wildflowers

Candles of tobacco
burn inside the vulture’s mouth.
She swims through my iris

        into the cave where she pecks
at the naked, sacred bones
of my ancestors. I am ten thousand

years old. I am ten thousand senses,
dancing on the edge of a cliff
        which cuts through the desert.

        I blow rings of fire
to hail the sun,
and char black my skin.

The moon breathes rings of light
to make it young again, and yet
        I wish it didn’t.

I open the throats of nights
with sunrise whose rosy light
        warms my arms.

I open the throats of days
with sunset whose death
        shakes stars from my hair.

Cold singes the air,
filled with hordes of ghosts
        of indiscriminate kisses

between trees and lips, breaths
of the ages, which tear out cities and break
the hearts of all things.

        I whisper to seedlings
and say that it is spring, of course
I am lying to them.

        I wrap a blanket ‘round
my wildflower bones and laugh
as the snow melts.

My roots dry in muddy sand.
My petals blink their little eyes
        but

        blind
they become
gently

when they stare aloft so long.
(Then dreams of heaven shine
        through darkness

        as heaven stirs
their sleepy leaves.)

Mountainface

Mountainface,
mountainhands:

be-love'd, as I move my pen, the sun hardly moves
my arm-span. And with the slightest flicker of energy, you
move mountains,
spirits.

The sun moves nowhere, really. It's our planet
spinning, dizzy and busy, but
not
us

dear mountain-face,
mountain-hands,
erode away. New beauty each
day

Each
hour, minute, heart-beat, now, new now. . . . .
Your hands on my cheeks. You
wrinkle and unwrinkle them in no hurry,

mountainface
mountainhands.

Las Vegas: June 2009

I.
Translucent clouds rimmed with silent eyes of Alina, shine of sight, wind-blown and dust-coated her prisms of fingers grace the valley in a transparent day. Soft gold sheets of air overlap in a vast column of air between heaven and this oasis where the desert's roaming white blankets are threadbare.
Sleepless withering of mountains to sand; sagebrush valleys with hands on the sun.
Whispering specter of water serenely tumbling through layered canyons of sandstone.
Tumbleweed skips to a symphony of crickets. Rock walls like the face of God.

II.
The sound of an airplane tore the sky open: its wake of mirror reflected nighttime neon tears, wild stationary tournaments of Roman concrete cathedrals, paradox parades intoxicated in the streets with a funeral band on a leash, nightgowns flying alongside flocks of pigeons, angels in bulky rhinestone suits and Mardi Gras masks, prostitutes singing along with slot machines, galaxies of blinking lights and never-blinking eyes…
The mirror turned to dust as the plane passed away, and scattered along the back roads, caught in the graying hair and weathered rags of those crucified on telephone poles. Those stirred to sermons by the confessions streaming on wires above their heads, those whose teeth chatter on winter nights as prayers of saints well up from the horns of sun bleached cattle skulls. Crowns of cactus thorns surround a flower bulb. Spear of the bumblebee. Maw of the lizard.

III.
Coyotes gape at the sun as it explodes like a dropped plate—Jackrabbit Death peaks from behind the remains—then it falls back together again.
"Sun dogs," scowls the Jackrabbit, pawing with his eyes a vast rainbow halo like a lasso of desolation, and lowered it down on Nevada.
Souls stirred inside hollow horse hides that filled the plains with the rattle of bones and rose to the sky where their dreadful white manes spread out as clouds in that broad rainbow devil's mouth, and waited for night—to rain.

IV.
And in the morning, in the mountains, me and Alina did awake, parched, next to dying embers and silent rising horizons of dusted rose and fire (though the night was no colder, I cannot bear the sight). Hung over and slung over each other and the backs of nude barren bodies, I rolled into her and combed through her hair with translucent fingers. "I think I feel rain on the wind," she said.
And the wind laughed at her in the gold arroyo grass.

The Playground

One of my earlies memories is sitting cross-legged across from Annabel
in our neighborhood park in Durham, Oregon.
The sawdust and dead leaves cracked beneath our weight the Way our parents ere silently
breaking—with every fist and tear, with every needle they added to the fragile silence of
our homes—our future selves and our hope for love and hope.

The river slithered through the decaying brush,
walking-sticks crawled slowly on the branches, then gave themselves back to the dirt and
its withering ornaments, monarchs wandered their way south, and that was the only
moment in the world.

Annabel held out a fortune teller made of paper—
the oragami kind that looks like four pyramids that come together, that you hold and unfold
with your hands inside. I picked a color and numbers and she split the pyramid in half one
way, then another, so many times, then she unfolded one of the flaps inside—

(you can't explain these devices unless you already know them from childhood any more
than I can explain the dreams that leak from my pores onto my pillow, down into the
mattress, where they create impossible gravity)

she unfolded the paper and read what she'd written in crayon there: the destiny.

"Your smoker's cough will wake any stranger
you sleep with, and when they hear you crying,
they'll pretend they're still sleeping. You will drink
the spirits of untarnished strangers and never be happier for it, but your blood will flow
harshly and you will raise the volume of the universe.
There will be two notes to all of her,
and her voice will match the view,
but will tear the sheetrock and your iris will orbit
the echo in that gash. You will take sleeping pills often
but once with liquor, and you will elope first
to the Sanoma vortex, then to the hospital,
then to the lospital waiting room. You will die once
in the galaxy of a blackout, and powder the sandstone
of the badlands with your bare hands,
only to wake wioth ghosts in the passenger seat
You will reason the lights behind your eyelids with math
and be less afraid but more alone,
never believing you are alone."

She began to cry, so I crawled over to her.
She pushed me away violently at first, then tenderly,
then she pulled me close and wept, cuddling my small
chest, while I whispered into her hair, "Don't be scared,"
with no feeling on my face at all.