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## **Romances & Reveries**

### **Hovercraft**

The suspense is killing me:  
If this is heaven, what could be  
The earthly purpose of this drift—  
Should I swim further, or make shift  
To find some meaning yet unknown?  
There is no sign, no portent shown  
That tells me why we hang about.  
We're breaking up; over and out.

### **Egg**

balanced on end  
set in a bowl of water  
candled  
coddled  
caressed in a warm palm  
it reveals nothing  
concedes no more than  
being an egg  
and yet withal  
miraculous enough  
and singular  
to the point of drawing  
a sigh and maybe just  
the glint  
the hint  
of what might be  
one tiny tear  
shaped strangely like  
an egg

### **Mirabella**

Pretty girl on the edge of the sunset,  
A hothouse flower wearing a hothouse flower  
Behind her ear, the warmth of early evening  
Rolling up from the heart of the city on a wave  
To touch the edge of her balcony and pull  
A little sigh from her gentle breast, she was  
A wordless tune, a birdsong, or a rivulet

Borne on summer air to make sweet sounds  
And touch the world a moment with her loveliness.

**How I Make This Place:**

A bolt of satin in a blue of supernatural intensity  
I throw from one end of the seen world,  
in an ascending arch, to the other, hang it  
billowing on a breezy framework as a summer tent.  
All around the sides, I prop it up with spiky mountains,  
flat, sharp-sawn from Masonite and painted white  
and purple with a hint of blue. I shore up the  
peaks with sandbags, which will be the foothills,  
color-crayoned on their sides in variegated green,  
the closest-in studded with darker bottlebrush trees.  
Over there, where the arch hangs close and deepest blue,  
I make a city of woodblocks, milk cartons  
and shoeboxes all stacked and piled close together,  
which I cover with aluminum foil and  
package wrap in glinting tinsel-y colors. The part  
you can see at night is rigged with twinkling  
Christmas lights and bits of mirror and a  
handful or two of multicolored sequins.  
There is a road leading to it, made of roofing paper  
cut to wind its way along, striped with yellow chalk  
and full of honking windup cars that move  
en masse to the city at daybreak and out at dusk.  
The road passes over a bridge, constructed spiderweb-like  
out of black coat hangers. The water underneath  
is crumpled cellophane, layered blue and green and  
clear and blown and black, and I shuffle them around  
at intervals to make a stormy noise, to change  
the color they reflect, and to calm my sea; when it is still,  
I toss a batch of folded paper sailboats on it and blow,  
to watch them mimic butterflies as they skim past.  
To right and left around the lake lie farms  
constructed patchwork-style from corduroy and  
textured silk and sprinkled here and there  
with bars of soap that I have neatly carved  
to represent the tidy white farmhouses. (I left  
the shavings lying there to look like sheep.)  
Egg cartons, dyed all one color and stacked  
symmetrically, make up apartments and  
housing developments. Last of all, I hurl a couple  
handfuls of attic junk across the scene,  
letting it fall any which way because there is  
always something in view that is unexpected  
or I can't identify. This is, after all, a place  
I am accustomed to, but it is never dull.

### **Burning in Midwinter**

Turquoise of the hottest hue  
(A word not often linked with blue)  
Bears in its heart the sun's true fire  
From its desert home, where it may transpire  
Even in this day of detachment, cool  
And belief in only the Facts of school,  
That mystic magic and alchemy  
Still stalk abroad and begin to be  
Unearthed in windstorm when the stone  
Under the sand is polished, blown  
To visibly capturing sun's wild rays  
To give bold turquoise stone such blaze

### **Blink**

The crystalline eye of the aqua-colored sea  
Beckons, winks at me with a sly  
Invitation to dip, to fold my wings and dive  
Into a little wave for a wet kiss  
Just as though I were made for it, even  
Born to make that splash in a place  
As foreign and exotic as this, so much  
A call to my heart indeed, that I  
Cannot resist and feel myself  
Folding up and leaning forward into wind,  
Letting the updraft pull and play until  
I split the silken drift, swim into  
The lovely salty tears of that great  
Aqua-colored eye

### **Caesura**

The space between things-that-happen  
Has a strange attraction, being  
Not merely empty or silent or still but full  
Of potential, brimming with possibility—  
Whether for good or ill depends as much  
On attitude and expectation as  
On fate, because  
Of all the things that can be poured into  
The gap while it lies there in waiting

### **Mirror for Contemplating Possibility**

The hollow of my hand cups round  
A looking glass when water wells  
Here in its center, and it tells  
Me that the future can be found  
In my own grasp if I would take

The time to seek it and to try  
To guide my footsteps or to fly  
Through any choice my heart should make

### **Nearing Heaven**

Shatteringly brilliant light  
Awash across the coursing lawns  
As though seraphic antiphons  
Had banished death and dark of night  
Crystalline and shining grace  
And ringing skies, infinite lakes  
Become the font whose flowing slakes  
All thirst for heaven in this place

### **Needful Quiet**

Moments spent in stillness can teach me  
Quite a lot if I'm willing to learn

That the world continues to buzz and race  
No matter what I do or do not  
And little of import will be utterly  
Saved or destroyed in my brief  
Moment of pause and respite

That those things saved and destroyed  
Are beyond the scope of one person and might  
Be redeemable only by those  
Who have taken a moment to contemplate  
How best to cope with their scale  
And their significance

That those who love me will understand  
My need for the quiet times

### **Unguent**

That house of transient peace  
Is where the torn and weary long  
To settle, though they find  
It stays not still;  
The balm of rest is sometimes  
In a cave or watered copse,  
And others, it sits on a barren hill.  
By day or moonlight I'll seek out  
In mountain, sea, or skies,  
The calm and peace in wisdom  
Sweet and fair,  
I'll know that peaceful house  
Will cool my brow and soothe my sighs

And, haply then, will stay  
Abiding there

### **Building Strong Bones**

In the lovely resonant  
shadowed hollow of  
an architectural ruin,  
the beauties of  
its skeleton become  
more than engineering,  
more than a means  
of shelter or a clever  
way to shut people  
in or out—  
What happens is  
life becomes caught  
in the interstices of  
a building's bones—  
vitality drawn off  
from all the smaller lives  
that have come through;  
in the humming open space  
of a lovely  
building in ruin,  
mortality is kept  
as though in a jewel-case  
or a body quite perfectly made  
for being loved

### **Reading**

A heavy braid of brown-black hair  
Coiling over her shoulder frames  
The mourning dove-brown collarbones  
That rise and fall in subtle flight  
As she breathes, sitting back there in such quiet repose  
As if to lend some grace to that so humble vase of white  
Field lilies at her side, and when she turns  
The antique pages of that favored book,  
She spares a moment's look to watch the lilies catch  
The kitchen windows' waning light  
Just as the late-day sun tips in  
Behind those distant trees to  
Chase the night

### **Ghost Images**

Grey misty days, indigo nights and wind that whips up suddenly  
without a seeming cause, are frights only to those who'd turn and flee  
at provocations slim, and slightest hints of something shadowy

But I am not afraid of these faint shades and palely passing things,  
instead, I wonder if they freeze in fear at me, these souls whose wings  
are clipped, and on whose quaking knees are bent, to hide from mortal stings  
We are, it seems, all fearfulest of that unlike what we know most,  
what is familiar and best, no matter if it is a ghost  
or is a friend at whose behest we once raised up our happy toast  
Yet have forgot, when he is dead, and think we ought to fear him now  
as though he were a cause for dread whom we once loved and would allow  
was more than harmless, bless his head, and still should seek him anyhow  
For company, remembered, gone, or living still, or even sheer,  
transparent spirit of someone who longs enough to reappear  
among us present ought to own our welcome without needless fear  
The world we see and what we know are far from all that there can be,  
and far from all that's good, and so we ought to revel joyfully  
when spirit friends or living, should seek out our simple company  
So as the night begins to fall, or wind kick up, or day grow cold,  
and chill our souls, hark to the call of friends quite new or ancient-old;  
embrace their spirits one and all, and only happy tales be told  
Both of those living or long fled, whether of days in blazing bright  
sunshine, or seeming dark as dread, or else the middle of the night,  
for all companions should be led to know they fill our hearts with light . . .

### **The Plains**

**I**

Measure in extremes:  
say, the hour at which  
a terribly long and disorienting  
day of flights  
begins as we make our way out  
to this Unknown;  
the weather—last week, a sudden  
thumping of snow, today  
pelting rain, and tomorrow the heat  
of incipient Spring baking us out  
of our coats; most  
intensely, measure it in a view  
from the thirty-third floor that goes  
forever in every  
direction without a pause:  
the Plains.

**II**

What is the sound  
of Longing?  
In silences scratched  
at their edge by hints of background sound  
—the faint hoarseness of  
the wind that sighs uninterrupted

over street, bridge and river,  
birds laughing shyly, sharply,  
then dropping back to speechlessness in  
branches mostly still brittle and mostly black,  
and a song  
based on the memory  
of First People's chant,  
heard only as though  
whispered  
from behind  
a closed pair of tall old  
metal braced doors  
—in these lie the long  
distances between  
the city and its aboriginal  
stone, between the grain fields that are  
and the totemic beasts that were,  
between today  
and the sleeping far-flung past  
of family and home  
left back East so many  
generations and loves ago.

### III

Beauty in in the breadth  
stretching across  
years, dreams, miles.  
From the softly bending bow of the new-laid  
promenade that sits  
at river's edge I can see  
the rest of the park with its sculpted  
monuments to itself in the form  
of other-homage; across  
and away, three hundred  
sixty degrees of prairie heart  
laid out in swaths, sweeping  
from tree-lined avenues and European blocks  
of castle and cathedral, copper  
and bronze, to distant fields, to  
the French Quarter, the dome  
of the Union Station, a modern  
downtown and market and carnival-ground,  
and off to the line-flat horizon everywhere  
but all,  
each element touched somehow  
by quieting hand  
of history and hope and distance,  
of silence and dancing,

of sweetness and gravity,  
photographed in the eye as stop-motion,  
as a still life fixed  
in reverence,  
savored  
in a kind of simple  
awe.

### **A Woodland Blessing**

Asleep upon a fragrant bed of boughs  
Whose resins resonate of evening sun  
With warmth and perfume...constellations run  
Their Milky way as far as night allows...  
The owl aloft is whiter than the snow  
Gone from these tales in winter's ghostly past,  
Though summer now is flying just as fast,  
And with it all the season's beauties go  
And so shall I, sent from this blessed bed  
Where I still dream amid my summer years,  
But I'll waste none of it on bitter tears  
For knowing that, like all, I'll soon be dead...  
I'd rather revel in the swift embrace  
That lets me lie on cedar in this place...

### **Petrichor**

The scent is all; this haunting  
fragrance takes, in perfect synchrony,  
my breath away and gives it back again,  
back in electric rush as though  
I'd leapt from ocean's-depths  
straight into air again—  
This moment, this aching, longing,  
gorgeous spark  
of miniature infinity, this marks the time  
when I find myself renewed, reborn—  
The atomized eternity  
that I breathe in, that I  
pull in through every singing, sharp  
electron of my frame, makes me go racing  
back into the origins of time—still  
fleeting, pass through iron gates  
to death, and just as suddenly,  
burst forth and know the spangled joys  
of present life again

### **Santa Fe Afternoon**

#### **(A Breaking Storm's Baptism)**

Ochre and indigo, shadows and fir,

and in the far-off pines, a chanting bird  
insinuating secret things is heard,  
then joined by other birds, whose hearts' desire  
Is that the fulsome, clouded, darkling sky  
should soon release a feathered shaft its own:  
the lightning, thunder echoing with groan  
and shout, to rout the perching birds to fly,  
For they all wait, as we, gravity-bound,  
wait under porches' purple-gloaming eaves  
for when the rain shakes us out of the leaves  
to chase again the richness of this ground,  
For water always wakens us once more,  
Resuscitating all with petrichor.