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I am alone and sad, as the soft gold evening dims....

Through the open window I hear the downy fall
of clammy flowers in a crystal bowl....

– And I do not know if I shall love her,
in the quiet and lightsome movement of her limbs,
and in her goodness in my strange existence....

I'm sad, and I hear her quiet footsteps going,
and her soft humming, in the garden, down below.

The ladder and the rope; the straw; the chilly smoothness
of bowl and knife.... The fearful morn dissembles, waits.
The air's inert. Each silence listens to the silence.
The house is deader than a snowy winter's night.
– The cauldron has been scoured where soggy swill once seethed,
the beast's outside. Sluggish wise fingers fumble;
the sow quivers; she stares askance.... And the day is
like a dead woman whom I'm not allowed to love....
– The day is empty. Hear the horses stamping in the stable.
The day's a void; the hollow Christmas bells are sounding....

My God, I was the head where Thou didst show Thy grace.
They knew it. And they fed me, like this beast
that their desire did feed and that their lust will slay.
With their rancour they fed my yearning thoughts
and I grew beautiful, and had not grasped their envy....
Now is the time, my God, when they will slaughter me
and – naught that my resistance can fix its fear upon....

– The day's a void. The hollow Christmas bells are sounding....

In the woods a belated axe-stroke,
across Leie a loud whip's crack.
To Westward the long dying
of the sun's last streak.

The white blossom of the pea-vine
blue shadow-quaking on the ground.
Schooled out of all affliction,
a smile about my mouth.

My heart, like the waving wool of the pale fleeces,
at the hour when weary evening leans to pallid night,
when the earth heaves sluggishly with sheep, and the rippling
of the flock and of a shepherd's pipe are sweet;
– a waving woolly tuft caught on each thorn-bush,
and....

– – God: behold my heart, behold this weary life,
frayed to your will just like a plucked-out fleece;
– but let me feel that a warm byre awaits me....

You wear your hair in a fine plait
all down your nether limbs....

– It is indeed a dismal day
of wavering and weeping.

It is a long, long evening of
dis-quiet and dis-approval.

It is as though the day can't die,
as though no night can darken....

– You walk on past my unlit house,
free of desire, erect;

I guess at your thin naked thigh;
I see your long dark plait.

Again the asters' baleful light begins to bloom;
again an autumn comes. – And this heart worn with longing,
in which the summer's torch begins to smoke and gutter,
then shudders, and recoils....

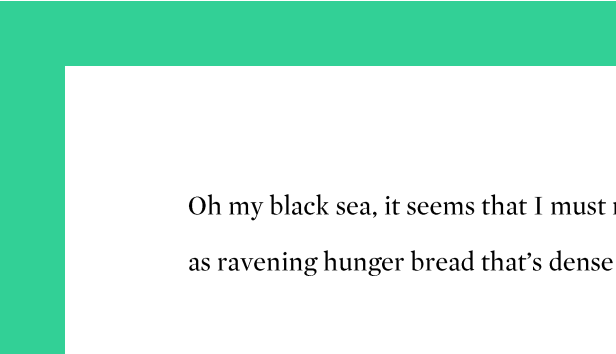
– I, whose hand felt the weight of the warm fruit
but was denied a bite in recompense;
who, knowing you are there, autumn compassion,
know myself the more alone;

eternal reaper, I, who cut the corn
but never for himself did bind the sheaf;
perpetual sailor in his watery furrows
who never to harbour came:

again an autumn comes; and again cruel want comes near
this heart that, without hope, yet does still know desire;
that, ever longing for this autumnal dying,
after winter knows it's spring....

– Again my autumn blood burns in beseeching gestures;
again the heart weeps where the old wound sears....
– How the gold of the chestnut trees is bronzing!
The silver aster blooms...

My friend, you have a whiff of the big stores about you.
Some girls are like that, scrawny and white-nosed.



Oh my black sea, it seems that I must relish you
as ravening hunger bread that's dense and dark.

A star: a clump of ice between my burning teeth...
While thou art hid from sight, oh sea that barely breathes;
while my heart keeps silence like an aged nun
comes this precise infinity to sear my lips.

– My nights were once a basket heaped with dreams;
my days the sum of all the apples that swell
in every orchard and on every laden tree.
I'd not fingers enough to count my riches.

Now: emptiness. The time is bleak, unmoved. The time
is like the chill and arid sea, that heaves nor moans.
I am alone; I press together my stiff lips
on naught but this great star, which scorches them.

Hardened mud and bitter crystal:
in my naked dwelling
rich and poor in naught and all,
I'm the sickest and most lovely.

House that isolates and watches:
heart that, all unmoved,
hears the sea that swells and ebbs
before satiated eyes.

In no mirror, gruesome-noble,
the image of a desire.
All the besoms are too many
to shore up the land.

Sickest and loveliest; – no: not even
the poverty of knowing
that no-one sees you suffering
and loveliness abandoned you
as you sat in your Nothingness
unmoving.

Through the earth in vain I've driven
a root, to the most secret waters:
no branch of me will ever bloom, nor will
the wind hear the resonance of my word
re-echo through the lofty foliage.

I am no royal queen of bees
imprisoned in her fruitful cell;
for never a joy of mine will sway
the busy swarms which, come May,
swell the chequered honeycomb.

And I have followed the straight way,
against the abyss of denial.
There's no abyss. And my delusion
would now just like to sleep a while
and lie tamely down to rest.

Like the throbbing lightning-dash of engines
to which a human will has strapped itself,
seeking to penetrate the unfathomable void
to where it pierces the gaze of God's eye;

no, but like light in light: like to a candle
so meagre that the sun swallows it quite
from early green to final purple glow,
but which knows that its smallness cannot be snuffed out;

no, but like carp which in the densest ooze
gulp in some life, until Death finds them out
who only then through rags of mother-of-pearl
lifts their blond bellies to the blowing light;

but no, oh no: like earth and like metal,
condensed by pressure and suction of the universe,
are inaccessible and secret rays
gathered together in one crystal tear;

no, but dead flesh, dissolved in sluggish streams
or richly blooming in a feast for worms;
no, just that flesh, that flesh and wretched oozing,
and the lowly beast that on the great beast dances;

no, no, oh God (I know not how to say;
I know not, God, I know not, but I say:
God);

like the...

like...

Smell of the beast in rut; smell of the too-ripe fruit;
smell of the sea; smell of an earth without air;
– I am the late one; I am the bad one; I am the madman;
I am the sickly mass on which no hope will graze.

I am the last pear on the stripped and empty tree.
I am alone in the chill autumn, and I'm numb.
I am enforced need; I am forgotten goods;
I am the heaviest and ripest and no throat will I slake.

I am the hazel-nut. – A soft and pallid worm
dwells in my chamber, and it's blind, and it gnaws.
I am he who sates a darkness with my seed.
And I become a void, which neither moans nor begs.

I leave my self; I suffer from my own self's empty harm.
I am the constant meal, within a tight-closed ring,
of a dumb, intolerable, selfish worm.
But let the finger of a child touch me, that tells me:
he hears my hollowness; I chime; I sing.

Give now, give! All the cargo's
hoisted to the rigging's height,
and the emptiness lays a gentle
sadness in the weary hand.

Give now, give! Leave the houses,
close the windows, douse the fire:
the wide clear heavens are the sluices
for your hasty voyage out.

I'm emptied out; I'm past and gone;
my life is done; I've given food.
All that's coming is my past,
since it owes its being to my plea and
laughs out of my forgotten blood.