

Embers
Reminiscences of Fire
by
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She Dance

Shuck, shuck,
She shudder shuck--
breasts all bounce
and grinding-smooth legs
turn on a dime
in time.

Stomach turn
and hipwhole roll
and wag
and churn
and swallow me whole.
With liplick burn
and hot breath hold,
she lag
she yearn
to linger
and lie,
to laugh
and learn.

Stance
style
smell
smile
fingernails painted,
fair and finely filed,
she's already aquainted,
she's boldly beguiled.

But she hasn't the nerve.
She'll waver, she'll swerve,
she'll be lofty and leave--
her heavy hips heave.

Shuck, shuck,
she shudder shuck--
eyes inviting,
legs inciting,
turning on a dime
in time.

Magician

And then,
she yawned,
and arched
her hand lazily
over and back
to the light cord

and turned
the light
on...

And then,
we looked,
the one
into the other's
eyes...

And then,
I stroked
her cliff cheek-bones,
(I, being a cliff-dweller, of late...)

And then,
she yawned,
and arched
her hand lazily
over and back
to the light cord

and turned
the light
off.

1968

It Being About Time For Life, For You

If our dreams meet,
could they interweave?

On the beach,
touch,
hold,
my neck.
Make a cradle,
make time rock
and tumble
through your hand.
Make a cradle,
let time rock
and tumble
in...almost to the sand.

We can make or break,
take or leave
time.
It can gather and roll
like yellowing photos
of you and me
gingerly
grinning
at the thought of ourselves,
at the thought of ourselves together,
at the thought of ourselves together making children,
making time,
making life-time.

While the sea wears away the pebble, lie...
while the pebble wears away
a strawberry blueberry stain on your thigh,
while what you wore is in the way,
while what you wear is shy,
a smile is coming,
a dream is laughing true,
and it's being about time for life,
for you.

January, 1969

Ancient Animal

I am an ancient animal
stealing along alleys,
picking at purposes
in dark back-doorways,
delving through forgotten dreams
set out in cans
to wait for the men in the morning.

These alleys conceal
all the golden goals
that the front-door people
cherished but lost
or never won.

They have shed their schemes
and sit naked at the windows
of their front-door homes,
while I don discarded dreams
and later find
they do not fit
or have holes.

1968

Custody

On the subway
they wouldn't sleep.
The baby smiled
at an ancient with glasses
and a greasy grin
and Josh referred
to the wino
in the corner.
He asked me why
he looked so bad.
He asked me if you
would soon be like that.
I said I didn't know...
Will you?

After the subway,
the drunk fell down the exit stairs.
Josh burst out crying.
His horrified screams
echoed through the empty station
and down the narrow street.
He sniffed and stared
and blinked all down the block
and then you weren't home
to answer my hollow knock.

1969

The Last Carpet

Anna Perdida is knitting
her last carpet.

Once the factory's favorite
dressed in muslin,
poor, blessed and pure,
she wove rugs
to buy breath and brocade -
time and freedom...
from the dust
and the bell
that rang at five.

The other girls smile
in the foggy funneled light
as she hurries,
her heels
muddied
and clicking like needles
on the stones
that shine
like the teeth
she now has learned
to do without.

Anna Perdida is knitting
her last carpet
slowly -
leaving,
while the other girls
still grin
in the lurid
whirlpool light
with teeth
that continue
to bite.

Bare tree to full—
leaves live and decay
until roots feed from food
that branches have made.

Rainwalk shimmering
holding halo handles,
little old,
brittle old
melting mildew candles.

Widow watch
through speckled glass
with withered, waitworn whitemask
and flicker, hung
like a nightshirt hung
from a backyard dryhard clothesline.

The years of yarn,
mend the tears
between small striped socks
and the white sweater
with the white hair
next to the hole in the shoulder.

And the clock
with cobwebbed face
ticks tempo like a metronome
to thimbled fingers
ticking needles
that mend the tears
in the years
of yarn.

Subwayman

Behind his Times
he is behind the three ladies
squawking like fifteen pigeons
on a synagogue roof.
He can ignore their chatter
and consume a candybar
careless of its wrapper rustle.

He feels not
the old man quaking
on the bench beside him.
He notices not
a short summer skirt
a shift,
a turn.

He ignores the beggar,
falling prey to pickpocket.

He would not hear
door-lock
trap-shut
gate-close.

He glances over his paper
to keep track of the stocks.
He lowers his paper
every three stops,
but for the most part,
he is behind his Times,
but for the least part,
he is behind the times.

Like the drunkard drinking,
sitting on a subway step
pushing back his old cap,
careful catching drips,
I would clumsy clamor
at a nearby nickelfall
give-love gift.

The First Time

She will come to call
by crocus candle light.
I'll draw her delicate dawn
in the deepest depth of night.
And when we are wise and weary
and waning like the night,
we will wear our wonder
like a crocus to the sight

1968

Recollections of the Disease—Summer 1967

or

Wouldn't it be nice if someone invented a machine with which to change—"all you have to do is match the correct numbers and press this button. You, the result, will be your dream."

Searching times, these.
Lift the trap door and
look inside—
taking care not to let out
the jack-in-the-box
and all his hob-goblins.

Silently watch the machinery.
Notice that somehow
the gears don't quite mesh
properly.

This existence is built upon a foundation of rotting wood—
a foundation of a child's wooden blocks of harlequin hue,
with the letters of the alphabet on their sides.
The letters spell this tortured question,
"Among all the bits of orange skins
and the seaweed and soggy crates and pebbles
that have been heaved upon the beach,
where are you?"

Notice how your life seems
A dream—
entity or not?

It is a thing more unreal in my waking hours than in my sleep.
It is a thing that catalyses in me actions and reactions that
disturb and disgust me.

Come and watch the growth of a monster.
But first,
please sign this statement
releasing us of all responsibility
in case of insanity
or broken limbs.
And please stand well back.
There is nothing you can do.

I imagine myself without this ball and chain of sterility.
In the circus of my mind I see myself as the Ring-leader

I direct the earth onto its axis.
Outside my tent, a storm is ranging, exploding—and time is untamed.
Inside my tent, I am in the center-ring, conducting the band in silent,
mastered music.

Notice how the creature tortures himself.
Notice the complex method he uses.
Observe the way he covers his tracks.
Observe his agony.

And all the platinum tombstones.
And the alarming dissonance of the spider's cry.

We are sorry, Madame,
but we cannot cure his sickness
until he is sick—
until he is well.

We are sorry, madman,
but we cannot cure your sickness
until you cure your sickness.

And I lift the pearl gray driftwood down from my shelf.
And I pray to it.
And I want to be a maker of driftwood.

(revised November 1968)