



To See You No More

*Janet Butler chapbook
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Acknowledgments

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to see you no more

bruised colors
smear a western sky

reds rot
and drift in clots
against a swollen sun
cracking against
the sharp edge of night

day flakes to darkness
and ashen shadows fill
the empty spaces
where joy was

Loss

Eyes darken
as images flesh from thoughts
that brush the heart
with painful sweetness.

Loss ever present
in life recomposed,
pieces rearranged
to disguise the absence
illuminating all.

love

the peopled streets and
peopled walks
jostle
desire's eye
slipping the curve and line
of crowd
to seek the one
that feeds and is
the lonely ache
the cherished presence
illuminating all

aimless

Spring charms again, of course.
Its beauty is in dainty things
that bring momentary joys
easing winter's dullness,
softening desire for what is
no more.

But a bleakness settles
and roots in nights and dreary days
holds at bay a cry - but, barely -
plods a future drifting
dusty roads
without you.

dry leaves

Perhaps the day begins even sweetly -
clear light, an early morning tang
and grey shadows on stucco walls
against skies heavy with summer.
It should be perfect.
And it is, almost -
in distracted moments that lift to joy.
But they pass.

The old ache stirs, raises its feverish head
breathes its autumn breath
on pain waiting forgetfulness.

somewhere

a thread of longing
weaves
across dark waters
to fall, perhaps, in fragments
on rocky shores
on the barren cliffs
of an indifferent heart
that cares no more

concupiscence I: creation

we rise from
love's heat
lumps of flesh
inflamed
sweat and sacred bonds
flowing
on filaments of
desire

the dark center
of birth
thunders
through waves of love
tossing quivering flesh
to heights of mystical pleasure
flesh made spirit made flesh
blessed
in the ecstasy of creation

concupiscence II: nightdreams

resistance falls
as dreams fill the rifts
where concupiscence waits
freed from limits
that weld the day-lit world

the ache seeps from cracks
that smell of sin and death
odors of
the two-backed beast
pounding with rhythmic fury
the sore spot of desire

love ii

the soreness longs
the longing touch
insistent unto ecstasy
mouth seeks mouth
rapacious
questionings in quest
of consummation
sacred as the bread made flesh
ferocious as the beast that sucks
the marrow from the bone and
the willing waiting breast

enough

it is enough, perhaps, after all
to hold in hand a moment or two
of glances caught
unsought
uncharted maps
treasured among the few that
the gods have deigned to fall
in hands, open, but unaware
of the pleasures waiting, hidden there

Memories

Tall windows open to a curve of sea
embracing a distant white-walled town
limpid against sunny skies.
Breezes ruffle thick dust
and long dead motes shift, momentarily,
in false exuberance of life and light
to settle again in sleep
as shifting shadows grey all.

A musky silence perfumes
of dreams that used to be
and footsteps that were
but are no longer
walk silently up a path
that is no more.

on looking back

We think we know it -
that we live
in minutes, hours, days,
that pass and blaze
and leave, even the mediocre ones,
a shadow on the soul
but, cleansed of pain and loneliness,
begins, then, the necessary reconstruction
the filtering, the distillation,
until the pain that cut and scarred
remains a quiet memory and, on looking back,
seems hardly marred, now,
by regret.

Ghosts

The room fills with the absent
they vibrate in a late afternoon quiet
like the after tone of church bells
that peal, insistent, on airs
taut with the almost heard of thinning chimes.

They press, the absent,
their angers, their loves, their desires
a tenseness in the heart
prisoner of itself.

No more

Fragments remain.

A morning cappuccino that flavored
early walks under high Italian skies
intense, “azzurro”
sky blues, light blues, bright blues that reached
to Heaven. Or so it seemed.
A favorite bench, then, in a city park
hidden on a slope of hill
where the rustle of a morning paper
became a refined intermezzo
in the honeyed silence of perfect days
that are no more.

fool's paradise

day thins to dusk
and night waits

fragments of tinted skies
drift and grey
then flame to flake
to ashes

cool winds descend
and lift and toss and carry away
the scraps that remain
of a fool's paradise

Depression

The heart a broken piece
chunks and hunks
that feed on self.
A spotty thing.

Rains hiss and fall in thuds
insisting
listen listen listen. . . .

The wines are bitter.
Vinegars ruby red
meant to appease the already dead
feasting in boredom.

Clocks tick today today today
on shelves picked clean
bone dry.

Melancholy

it weighs and burdens days
with fretful imprecisions
careless darts
missing marks
its drifts its hesitations
whirlwinds
born within

Ophelia by the stream

The waters flow in limpid rhythms
erupting in delicate frisson
against marbled rocks
banking deeper mysteries.

She watches, calm now,
the moment an ecstasy of observation
of water grasses forest freshness
all stoic witness
to life yearning death.

Choices made blossom now,
tossings on an empty bed
where dread slept in corners of a barren room
and a desolate future rushes towards an emptiness
already here.

How cool the waters feel, how soft the rush
the touch on weariness
as she falls, a sleepy mermaid, to mystic depths
and peace.

the center of the universe

sleep mists to waking
its dreams
shifting constellations
that roll with sluggish purpose

light begins its play
of line and angle
thickening
to form and shape
under ivory skies
and Apollo
pulled and teased and tossed
by salient forces
bends to
Venus
and desire
sitting in radiance
at the center
of the universe.

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