

HUDSON SONNETS

1

Each morning, I serve you three bananas.
They're small, I tell myself, but on their way
to being lethal. Love is always
impatient, unkind. I think of a woman's
life, how long it takes her to write one book.
I think of the black and blues that mark my
chin and knees from walking too fast. Meanwhile
I've stopped touching your face. When I look
in your eyes, I see nothing but fire.
It's Christmas. I buy you a present
because I have to. Lonely or sad,
rosy or blue, love is too intense.
You overwhelm me with your powers.
I'm afraid my own will drive us both mad.

2

Here we are again, home with the lights fading.
"We'll have a Christmas tree," you say. "A tree
in the house will warm us. Before long we'll be
standing together, loving our tree, loving
each other."

Gone the hunter, the captor,
the lust for blood. You're back with your wisdom,
your Windham Hill records, your easy grin.
Inside my headphones I'm frightened or
do I crave the assault of the familiar?
Love hides in shadow like poison arrows,
thirsts for the brush of skin, the hushed voice
of night. I hear Tama drums and wonder:
Will I turn my back on surviving alone?
When you touch me, will I have a choice?

3

There are fiddles in my head, gentle rhythms
 anyone could sleep to, quiet tones
 that hurt though they're not supposed to.
 You say you love me. I find your arms
 too hot, your need deep as a prism
 that fractures white light. Am I insane?

I dreamt I died and felt no fear of pain.
 Now I fly down Hudson, duck the Tappan
 Zee, head for stations south. The river is
 particularly gray. You pushed me out of
 bed today, set yourself free. The final sin
 is mine. I talked to God, said all this
 running drives me crazy. She said: Love
 plays a fiddle in your ear. Listen.

4

Deserted by loved ones during the night,
 you'll find yourself the only parade
 on this side of the Hudson, displayed
 before you: one sharp knife in a pool of light.

This is significant: the light, the knife.
 For years I swore you were trying to do
 me in with thimbles full of port. You knew
 my weakness for the grape. Was I right?

A woman with red hair reads quietly while
 she eats. The room is empty. The river
 flows by as usual. There's an odor
 of the past, an echo of ice cubes like
 the day we moved from the city upstream
 to begin the unfolding of dreams.

5

The red-haired woman sips wine at a window table. Presented with salad, she stares across the Hudson as if saying a prayer.

I myself have rarely been alone.
When I am, I wonder who will touch me,
strain to remember my favorite color,
step carefully as if walking on water.
The river seems to flow beneath my feet.

I imagine carving my initials
on the face of a cliff, rowing downstream
from Croton to New York harbor where
the Atlantic, splayed with sunlight, hails me.
No memories pursue. The ocean fills
my cheeks with wind, my hair with salt air.

6

Midnight: I wear gray wool socks, blue jeans
and a cotton shirt the color of pumpkin.
No one can see me. My car is leaning
against a snowbank on 81st Street.
I sit with my back to a picture window
overlooking the park. There are no ghosts here.
I am no longer trembling. My hair
reflects the color of my shirt. It glows
in soft light while you sleep miles up-river
near the hills of Croton, unaware of my
flight or your freedom. I hear classic
guitars, six of them, while synthesizer
weaves in and out, connecting sounds, fine
threads that cross the air like new music.