

the problem that we are not permitted
together, anthropomorphically assigning qualities
a *karpoozi* sold off a truck could care
less for, from this as from any altar, better
than from the shot of morphine
the doctor administers the last time
I freak, cramped, I can blame
myself in your presence & claim this room
never had to do with my life, someone's
rotten smiling teeth above an undershirt like sailboat
mirrored upside-down in sea, lit in the courtyard
by the cerebral cortex of ultrablue cable television,
Lucille in flames, addressing Ethel's willing
slow-take, the enormous wash-out of beach, weed,
sea, sea, & sea, so that I can remember
my center, backyards of beautiful barns & junked cars,
the America I lose you in when we return,
with precision, & with my usual splash
as from outer space, years later, alone, I land
up on a given afternoon crossing
the Mississippi into Galesburg, Illinois, through
Carl Sandburg Drive, past cemented Penney's,
singing down Main with the church
bells of an historic cyclone, as one remembers
an old life lifted from an old notebook, as obvious
as our souls drifting the coast off Mars
or worse, your face on the cover of Mars.
I give you back my heaven. You're all in my head.

RACE POINT POLAROIDS

Rather than bear the farthest touch,
rather than be rain, having been
neither of this world nor mad, as it turns
out, on and off during a year
I saw someone had bitten your neck near the baby
hair, and also your shoulder. Why does it show,

is it mindless, where nothing moves in a field in a world,
and it is morning? After living
in the sprouting desert there is nothing
like the thought of sweet rain falling into a salty bay.
Even though you never came after me
 all summer, nor called,

not once when I said not to, like finally
stepping over water after contemplation of it
as sand, two crows in the moans of the salt
water in my head answer for whom are we mysterious
and suffering, for loveliness, earth
 darker deeper beiges, more chartreuse.

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We make love in a beach woods one afternoon
without touching,
on a white towel, pine cones and pebbles,
and tell each other our separation is over.
You have always been in love with your mother,
 you and your father, now dead.

Your gold coin slides under your hair at the nape,
or the sun.
Onto the sands shed
the leaves of your leather jacket and red corduroys.
We're almost on earth with the sharp light like fresh linen
where we've slept in one bed.

I will never for a minute give myself to an indulgence
 that hurts you,
not after being thrown together as from a horse.
The bounty and liability of the familiar, these eyes close.
I am chosen, I said. I love
 you, I repeated.

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As the high tide covers the eyelid of sand,
in a broad sweep, beloved, a scattering
of foreign languages on an American Beach,
flourescent, treeless,
my mind moves one to the other freely, desert and shore
the famous swing of childhood.

In life tenderness, in art phantasy.
And when I lost you, the part in the path I bike blind,
it was nothing compared to falling in love,
nothing, body and morning perfumes, I'd never had
a companion, it seemed fated at the time,
bathing together, one watching,

the end of October and the beginning of November,
it was worth coming alive,
eating a common meal in bed,
touching your shoulder blade under a cashmere sweater
under a hood of birds and wind, I remember, now that I want you
to offer what cannot be asked, sacrifice.

*

In town to play an amusing game, whether I will ask
the beautiful cashier to dinner.
October, one after the other,
burgundy and concord leaves hesitate
on the large thighs of the dunes circling the marketplace,
praying to raise your consciousness to being

uncomfortable with resignation. For I am
impatient to return life to attention
and death called into question, being wrong.
Like an indulgence I always want
your pain no more
infinite than mine. I remember our shared world

of nerve endings, like a kiva with its power
line unearthed. In the gray hydrant
Saturday-night-into-Sunday-brunch
here where it counts, the outdoor
light lies smashed with the unfocused
stare of the deeply sexually spent.

*

And they followed me across the world which was sand, your color,
like fawns ochre and gray in the first hours of day, night
whenever I woke—
your eyes, held open by the stiff leaves of desert perennials
and sacrificed to devotion, molten,
to where even a petal tearing now recalls

there has barely been one world where I beg mercy,
god, burrowing an arroyo in a blue pick-up half-asleep
until I can do it practically
blindfolded,
and I arrive like an athlete to the stadium
after stiff nights of travel and a steady heart,

god my lungs,
one leg over a crossguard, a modern outpost, the day-
moon, like the introduction of a horn
into a string piece,
or penetration,
your choice the province lit by flame.

*

Because life is on fire and I am a visitor
I drive along the embankment in a violet aura
to the security check and am turned back.
In a distant town I presume the mildness
of Los Alamos school children over their texts.
Like a painter working outside again

with the gentleness of one who loves his work
or sex—there's always a reason not to if you think about it—
I detour to Banelier, the Pueblo ruins, society wrought
without metal, and I sight-see a clay hole—as in dream
the saturnal glow of the burners, the fermentation of the rain—
the *sipapu*, fashioned for souls to re-enter this world.

We love those places best
beyond where our drives never extend.
Sleep-shapes mountainous and timeless,
The Back of Beyond—Pasternak's reference
to far east Siberia, the back of the room for the worst pupils—
explosions of a higher order, violets.