

THIS SLAVE DREAMS HER WORK
AS IF SHE WERE A LAMB COMMANDED
TO BE A MUSICIAN

The heroin in your veins
comes out to be perfume,
an immensity that scrambles against the wind
until its stem shatters.

Your makeup
is a slower worship to the devil.
We take our veins from the inside
and love them that way.
Our only organs are the heart and the skull.
Heart and skull
emptying into each other
like rouged nothing into a slag heap.

Smoke covers our eyes.
Neither you nor I can tell on which side
or from which lung

the blood is pumped into:
the chest a skull
the intestines a skull
the hard skin the skull that holds it all in.

Yet doesn't.
The vision escapes.
The heart sound
goes out
to where you stand on a street.
The wind's fiercest cold hardness
shoves you into a doorway
as if you were a lie
in a clean throat,
your seventeen teeth scrubbed daily,
a few, but well kept,
terrified to smile.

I've felt your broken rib with my thumb.
How many with their ten dollars
stuffed into your pocket
asking:

Is she as lovely as 3rd ave. and 13th st.
in the moonlight?

Is she as lovely as a dirt path
cut between ten thousand weeds
in full sunshine?

Is she as lovely as a passageway
lit by the red certainty of a rat's eye?

Would they guess what urge
tears your eyes into false lashes
and makeup
like coffin covers?
Would they know what love you take inside yourself
to let die
and make love for
in the face colored air
a woman asking

Am I as lovely as a purple swamp
in some total eclipse?

And I have seen her near collapse from the effort
after half an hour with a glass of water and a needle
in the bathroom.

Or should I tell the truth?

That one must think of a face that's perfect
to see one that's not.

Or that your arms should have no veins,
and they would grab me without permanent injury
and be permanent.

Or that you are human, and I know very little about it.

That you are alive, and I know nothing of that:
so that you would take from this earth an apple

and that apple's skin
would be a flying carpet in my mouth.

Instead, our life
will be a dream without mirrors
where strangers treat you better than friends.
We will live in coal mines
meant to be skyscrapers
with metallic appliances for walls.
And we shall sleep as friends
whose ancestors were destroyed by plague.
And we will never meet.