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Texts That Corrupt

transmogrified from John Ashbery's "The Corrupt Text"

The seasons of strife only now take effect so we notice.

Complications, difficulties he made (or so they say)
that overtime and sharper pencils won't affect,
or resurrect our fall from grace. Ever again.

Let me be all you ever had, let me destroy what
can't be yours, like peasants blowing up railways,
their stares like empty pockets weighed down with
the taste of water. Only distance can cleanse us
from our wanting preferences; a broader analogy
would be to wait until it comes out on video.

We'll hit the streets again, start moving out
of the eye of the storm if we must; out of the way
of swiftly-falling skies, the thrown pie that flattens
the national affect like a bulldozer to a bland texture,
rewards the featherbrained, who never notice how
effectively an encomium keeps them up to speed.
We are a corrupt race, brooding over lost instructions.
Child, find your way before the mice eat up the crumbs.

VII. f. Folly

splendor followed
the empty neatly
stars shivered acidly
shifted once more
were being relit
facing into the wind
anyone ought to see
up close persisted
another night folded
into darkness

VII. g. Tilth

departure was impossible
extravagantly stretched
as far as he wanted
wine diverted great big muscles
glory appeared in a hard lump
snowing gems fell
in last year's colors
his head did a little somersault
over nothing at all
the right things made him tremble
dizzily striving for oblivion

VIII. b. Idiot

to leave the house fanged
shifting heavily carved air
with his fingers drawing the length
of matter that isn't nice
that isn't a feathery creature
speaking felt fluid
as though mingled with terror
ask an old forest dragon
somebody has to
be having fun

IX. a. Thrall

the next circumlocutions
tended to be graceless
in the middle of anonymity
a rectangle lay on fog
men nameless twice
aroused more fear
the rules hurt
hell tumbled down
spirits trickled up
obviously not supposed to
nothing lived like a queen
polished privacy smiling
strangely a stranger

tries anything that's handy
beautiful had a temper
a glamour masking someone
free from human life
fumbled flecks of gold

IX. b. Lamia

circle three times around a thorn
expecting to fly out of the wind
the usual brandy wine for breakfast
moonlight stinks of rising flames
heraldic banners remind the morning
to feel splendid in the afternoon