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Dear Sisters Gone

To my dear sad sisters gone,
bones in burlap in the dunes
what terrible end, what fear in the dark
what small bodies broken
what clues left behind?

To my dead whore sisters gone,
How to say no to men and money,
both smell so good when they are in your hands.
They had to make it illegal or whores would own this world.

What juiciness of youth you trade
to buy a present or earrings or rent.
How fast it comes after the first check held
is long forgotten at some dank office.
Or waiting tables and seeing your mother
(she's young enough to be your sister)
with rotten teeth at the factory.

To my sad slut sisters slayed
I saw your thong clad cheeks for trade
admired the price you could get for such youth
breaking the cycle of chicks broke for decades
then naked, and flush, what a height!

You live throbbing from so much action
and so little satisfaction all you want
is the call and the cash, you can smell the phone
about to ring, the man and money coming.

And then you cannot stop.
When the cash has his cologne on it.
Walking down the street on a beautiful day
with \$600 in an envelope in your bag
vs. walking down the street on a beautiful day broke.

At 22 how did you have the courage
to follow the call, to put up the ad
to answer the phone, to get in the car?

Once you do it once and it turns out alright
how can you ever go back to the straight life?
Once you do it and it turns out bad,
what other options do you possibly have?

The men have cash
They smell like cologne
You take off your dress
You get good with god
You give them your stuff
Legs here or there
The mad cash for flesh
Flush full and rich
How can that be bad?
Roll the dice
Spend the cash

A jaw is smashed, my god: what horrors!
A jealous lover calls the cops
You lose your kid
It's time to stop
Roll the dice and crash

To my soul sisters unbetrayed,
All it takes when you're 5 feet tall and small and a little crazy
Is a man who likes to party.
Or find a man who makes you mad
When he got you so high you don't understand
it is all about him and making him happy and getting your money
When you're a little crazy and so young and have no one.
When everyone knows and looks the other way because they see you are
looking pretty with a heavy purse.

What happens is you hollow out
your eyes and thighs will hollow out
and you're even more gamine and attractive to these guys.
You lose your juicy youth as they suck you dry
and leave you with fluttering sheaths of endless cash

*To the Ocean Parkway
to the beach we loved,
the place of long sunburned rides of pink and blue hues
and perfect mirrors and songs on the radio
that long straight road of anticipation and of bliss
is a graveyard, a charnal ground.
It was always thus, but for what we didn't know.*

California Poem

Do you see it coming?
as fast as you can fly across the country
as fast as a Ford Bronco: you're on a bicycle
and she's on a cell phone.
Haven't we paid our dues enough?
Don't you see it coming?
The odd curb cut when you've lost your car
in the bright sun beside the tall ships
slipped in San Diego Bay?
and after such a fall you think
"Why didn't I see that coming?"
or "No one could have seen that coming."
and "Haven't we paid our dues enough?"

The smooth slapstick of channel surfing
is almost unbearable. The blood suckers
pepper sprayers Mrs. Newt Gingrich failures.
Haven't we paid our dues?
What PhD bears PTSD?
Don't you see the dried up literal mindedness
and lack of trust? Yes, they do too but they are tenured...
shifty evolution mirrored in frightening lowlights.

What freaking Chinese fortune I find
in an old coat pocket: "A ship in harbor is safe
but that is not what ships are built for."

There is pleasure in eating lunch
of red snapper at the Fish Market
in shadow of larger than life
statue of WWII soldier kissing that nurse
25, 30, 50 feet high in cartoonish colors.
The harsh backbend always a borderline rape,
a subway grope, immortalized like its ok.
But never mind, there is the Midway,
bigger than a small city. Later I drive to the top
of Palomar and touch a tree even bigger.

The cure to each malady on this planet exists
in the form of specialized plants -- a puzzle

the gods have given us to figure and
they giggle at our failure every time
and we clear another acre of rainforest for a pipeline.
In the kitchen I ply the white pine cone
giant with its talons and crusty sap
for just a few fresh from the mountaintop pinenuts.
“No wonder these things are so expensive,” I say.
“If it fell on your head it would kill you,” says my sister.

Don't you feel it?
The way time has speeded up
into corresponding loops, similar but different,
surreal and indifferent, the sound of tape titters, pressing forward,
the mechanical resistance of a hard, old button to press.
Boomers saying “here we go again” blameless
big wheels of dharma, I felt positive and capable, then quickly
incompatible with all I knew before, incomprehensible
because it is so familiar as to fuck with memory, therefore
mortal existence. Which Buddha warned us of when he said:
“Take it all as you would a dream.”

I went to Occupy Wall St.
the horrible drummers loud as hammers.
I went home to the foul-smelling panpipes of leaf blowers.
Aren't you sheerly exhausted?
What is the frank and blank explanation?
Except to accept our smallness and rescindance.
What small circles of time and friendship?
What call to family dinner is this?
Dishes clinking in the sweet
eucalyptus suburbs.
What invaders are we?
of dry land and bedrooms.
Feet touch the ground – how strange to
feel strange or to not feel anything
after speeding at 500 miles an hour at 32000 feet
for so many hours and see into the land's
massive Grand Canyon, miles and states and days to explore...
here but a completely formed labial chasm,
to confuse shadows with lakes, snowcaps with clouds
and not feel just a little dizzy and crazy wisdom?
A long journey and a vision.

Can you see it?
It's always there if you want it
Right there in your dreams.
No not those dreams. I mean
the dreams you have at night
while you are sleeping. They will reveal
a piece to you if you listen.

So listen:

At my door was a frightening animal
sniffing, but no, you said, it is a nice animal visiting
like the time the neighbor's dog hid in our doorway during a storm.

So I open the door and find a baby black lamb.
She picked me like a new cat, in the rough wool,
I embrace the black sheep inner child
into the fold of many possibilities.

There are no accidents.

Rush on MTV

I. Dream, 1/6/20

Laying in the yard
looking at stars
noticing my eyes
adjust as the neighbors
turn the lights
off

The neighbor is you
up in the attic
looking for the switch
the aperture opens
and I see shooting stars

You return with your
massive boom box
I know the song before
the first chord just
from the opening note
How many times did
we hear those songs
the first year of MTV?

Your little sister Jenny
is there. I give her
a blazer for her
job interview tomorrow
Who *are* you? she asks
Who are you to give
me this blazer and
give a shit? she is
really asking

I look at you
and say
I chose him and
he chose me.

2. Dream x Three Morning Pages (Palimpsest)

Loser who is
 laying in the yard
 comes out of
 looking at stars
to take my eyes
nowhere.

Portrait of the reckless daughter
 adjusts as the neighbors'
 other irony
 turns the lights
 blue nights
off.
death.

In the last pages of where I was from
 the neighbor is you,
 Griffin Dunne.
The sidewalk up in the attic
 did not belong to Q
 looking for the switch in the present.

The passion for a project
 is the aperture gone
 long before you can finish it.

Door closes.
 So then you are working with
 shooting stars.
Something else.

I feel stingy.
 You return with your
 grayest rainy day.
Massive boombox
 I keep my secret.
I left my new beginning
 before I knew the song
 but no one makes money writing.

So often I end up

the first chord in the kitchen.
just this
That push and pull
of domesticity and art have been
a big theme from the opening note
in both marriages.

How many times did
his prickly attitude toward
the work, the patients, disturb us.
We hear that,
how conflicted he was.

It seems like these
first years of MTV
were not meant for anyone
to see.

Your little sister Jenny,
the day job and the poetry,
some aspect of it is there.
I give her what the outside
world will think of a blazer
for her reckless daughter.

The job interview tomorrow
has unconscious racism out
there for all to see.
Who *are* you? she asks
How do we see ourselves?

Art and fear and shit...
Who are *you* to give
a story about ceramics
to pottery?

this blazer class
is really asking.

There are adoptees
everywhere.
And he chose me.

3. The Visitation

Rush's drummer Neil Peart had died
the news said later, during the hours
his songs blasted from the boombox
in my dream.

I know it was a visitation.

Magnetosphere travel in his last hours
sent "spirit of radio" frequencies
to all tuned in.

Touched me back

to the age of 14, the revelation of MTV,
radio replaced, always on,

a background soundtrack

to a zine painting beadwork retreat

for the rest of high school's basement days.

At the beginning, 1981, it was a very short playlist:

Pat, Chrissy, Stevie & Petty,

Palmer, Bowie, Tears, and Rush.

The video was

filmed in an A frame

full of musical equipment,

the extreme long shot, surrounded by snow.

I wasn't the biggest Rush fan.

I never thought about them, or bought a CD,

but it had become a part of me,

something swallowed and forgotten.

Now I watch it all again,

and I *hear* the songs,

the cold Canadian boredom,

and its freedom.