

Anonymous Intruder

ANONYMOUS INTRUDER

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‘At Rest’ and ‘Not Enough to be Innocent’ borrow and mix phrases
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'It's funny when you become aware of your heart it's as though you can feel it beating in the sky and in nearly everything except yourself really'

— Kenneth Patchen

For J.

1

REARRANGEMENTS

THE FAMILIAR DEAD

1

Transfigured already without
my noticing, the spaces
between the notes are no longer

lonely foreigners lurking
among orthodox ranks of people
along the thoroughfare's

busy length, but a movement
exact and entire as the widening
of your smile. This is scarcely news

yet I swerve speechless, without
a plan, bareheaded in the sun,
looking for a thing to love.

City ghosts shift ground,
eyes black with the mirth
of street children. You cannot quite

recognise the darkened version
of yourself in the window. Winding
streets have brought you here

and now you have forgotten
the way home. You sob
like a child to be allowed in.

Your shoulders merge with the canal
at your back. The familiar
dead refuse to leave.

3

You show me the lavish scrapbook
of your life: the journey to school,
the pain of being teased

or shut out in the playground,
the different roads you later took
which in the story

are still your kingdom.
Although your remaining chances
are few, you're leaving again

to trace long shadows back
to their vital source. Among the wreckage
you stay afloat without noticing.

The rain was the same in each city.
In my quest for comfort, I'd drained
my journey of all meaning.

Further down the street she asked
if I was a stranger. She'd mistaken me
for someone else. For 50 bucks

she offered a fleeting realm
of scent and warmth. At first
I was afraid to follow. I remember

her goose-pimpled skin, the stocking
with holes, the scattering
of dead matches by the bed.

5

In the hotel room by the railway line
a breeze blew the curtains inward,
shifting fragments of sky.

You lay on your stomach, head pressed
into the pillow, your dress bunched
over your thighs. Afterwards

we went through endless back streets
in search of what was missing.
The summer rain steamed.

You grew tearful at the barefooted
children who dropped stones
into the bowl of a blind man.

Concentrate on the architecture,
not the illness, things to make
and mend. Yet it's difficult

to know where you are when
the concision of guides only adds
to the feeling of lostness.

You cannot or will not go
home. For almost every
corner or porticoed street

there's a journey through thick
grey air, a face without
a name at the end of it.

7

On the crowded tram, the accidental
touch of a hand is enough
to pinpoint your loneliness.

You grow open at the mouth,
the city an endless thread
you cannot stop unravelling.

Shadows on the street are pared
away. Each face becomes
beautiful and impossible

seen through a moving window
like dolls waving bright
paper flowers and flags.

REARRANGEMENT

When I become aware of the nakedness of the place, I hear someone laughing who is really in pain. Approaching from the other side, I recognise the tangle of lives without understanding the direction they've come from. My mouth is trained to form sounds as if I were expressing my own desires, my body to move as if there had never been another way of moving. For how could I be caught otherwise between pain and its expression? Yet I once dreamt of these scenes differently, without melting away, or wondering who it was they thought of when they called my name.