

Marriage in Autumn (Take #83)

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It's a serrated autumn of knife cuts
and body parts, hands or ears turning
brown in random roadside cemeteries.
Hacked corn like failed men, wind stacked, shocked.
The boy with the berries in Hiroshima and Pompeii.
The explosion and summer over.

The compendium of burgundy maples leave.
Oaks fall leathered and brittle suede.
The lawn looks like a massacre.

I know, mother.
I didn't expect it to be easy.

The apple trees ring our farmhouse
with leaves a filigreed 18 carat.
I am married inside and out.
It's a bronze cage in the Dark Ages, still.

This may be the last sun Sunday until May.
I feel snow coming like a recurring dream of drowning,
a surrender in salt water where you open your mouth
with a diabetic's thirst. It's fire
water dead women must have.
A colossus of salt and kelp
and still we call them stitch-mouth
as they bruise belly up and bloat.

I stack ash and hickory under a collared sky,
an enormity of small blue tiles like a puzzle for a child
or a diversion a sultan might buy.

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I'm tired of stopping at red lights,
letting cripples take the seats
while the blind go first.
I'm handicapped, too.
I have diseases this century can't define.
Give me the wheelchair and cane.

It's not carpal tunnel, you fool.
I had my fingernails pulled out.
Harper & Row gutted me.
I renounce prior oaths, rules and vows.
I'm sick of the linguistic curvatures
thermodynamics anchors on a word
such as *gravity*, how science refuses the obvious
suggestion of pewter, weight, shape and water,
an avenue of architecture, punctuations sculptural.

I'm sick of the way lines break in a poem,
how trees splinter in October thunderstorms,
and heart are seized by lamplight every night
with the TV on and the fields aggrieved.

I collect news from headlines that don't exist.
The circumstance of sudden abandonment, say.
What sort of lamps and rugs did she favor?
A vase, cobalt, antique glass, is missing?
Did she employ perfumes for ritual?
Was her birthstone ruby or opal?
Was her affection for sage or lilac?
Don't answer. She's a stranger.
Why did you marry her?

Outside fox, owls and bats.
Deer tear dried reeds, ripping off
leaves that look like skin and clay.
We're stripped minimal to what we are and did.
A painting is 4 feet of history gouged out
from the canvas-tented circus we rent.
Now autumn again, and that taunting fleshy
orange maples flaunt before they go red.

I know the raw marrow of night
and where the spot-lit tango solo goes.
The deciduous are bipolar.
I want a helix I can wear like cashmere.
I'm a walking autopsy.
I carry candles and lamps.
I like my sins neon lit.

Yes, dear. I've filled the larder.
There's cider in the trough.
I've cut the antique linen

into rolls the size of bandages.
I have flashlights, barrels of oil, more coin.

We have tinder and gauze but stars so savagely
and accurately wrought promise a night
that won't wash off.