

1974

After Chagall

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GRAVEDIGGERS' STRIKE
New York, 1973

Don't worry about my body.

While the gravedigger walks in front of the gates
with one gold earring
and a sign, *Unfair*,

you can give my eyes to the eye bank,
and my heart and my liver
to the heart bank and the liver bank,
and whatever skin, bone, hair can be used
by those in need
of worn-out skin and hair.

The scars don't matter. The part
that I've been searching for, these years,
in the discarded heaps of fallen hair
and sloughed-off skin
and dim memories
and forgotten dreams
will be gone by then.

Do I hurt your cause, gravedigger?
My death follows the pattern of my life.

AFTER CHAGALL

Lady, your head is on upside down.
What do you see?

I see a chair, waving its legs.
I see a bird's back.
I see sunflowers standing on their faces
holding up the world.

Here I am, floating through the sky
with my head on wrong
so that my hair tickles my neck
and my chin sticks up,
and the lovers kissing in the garden
look comical, their feet straining
to touch the ground.
It's been a long time since someone
kissed me in the garden.
My mouth's up too high.

I get confused, floating around this way,
and can't always remember if I'm a woman
or a bird. Birds don't kiss at all.

I see a house falling on a man
sitting near the chimney with a fiddle in his hand.
The man and the house are falling straight at me.
But I'm not worried.
Even though I look at trees
and houses and fiddles and gardens
in a strange, circular way,
I know that up is up and down is down.

It's just that I can't seem to get down
and nothing ever comes up
except a bird, sometimes,
(who doesn't count, because
I'm really a woman).

If I can't reach the garden, I'd like
at least to get to the roof, and sit
and listen to the fiddle.
I'm not asking for kisses,
just a roof under my feet.