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S. Anna Stephens

FROM *POEMS TO SEIZE SOUND*

[1]

With an improvised web for wonder
from the belly of heart,
I cast for the nothing that is

and the mind of more,
for the Jesus-bread,
my grave for hunger,

to attempt mercy because of blossom,
breathing in vertical streets
for a map of our mind

to meet junipers head-on,
to hear the applause of grasses,
to see the steady ovation of wings,

to know the mix and the marvel
of serendipity's city vibrato,
singing in the loose page blowing.

An assembly of the spoken shapes the bird sounds.
Another redemption for the convex:
deity in a reddish-brown thicket.

Ladders of light tip toward the all at a kind slant.
Spirally coiled seedpods and axils of upper
leaves in abundance, twist for milk.

Desire links your shadow
to my self, blooming
heart-roses in our mutual sky.

His long root runs to the tip of us.
Together in a new world,
we sip the ink of a new backyard

to know the first occurrence,
the mystery of fragrance
from the first garden,

then enter the luminous coil.
Listen to the stones
keep the distance at a distance.

[2]

Who is the mad moon courting under its mad moon?
Plows on the father's land,
seeds in the mother's hand.

From Eden's wild sky, a lightspray of stars
thrown upward to mind,
the opals of our high ember,

light words on wind, the silence of etcetera's
thread within the wail,
is our unknotting, speech beginning.

An apple wrapped in unforgiveness
is lifted toward a gleaming green.
Its yes widens over fear,

its chordal roar is an uproar wrapped
in waves and leaves and light.
This is the prairie of us between ourselves,

a seasonal home by an emptying sea,
an occasion, a garden, made marvelous
by the slow, forgiven leaving thereof.

[3]

In the eternal hour
stunned by an insensible spring,
I delight in the open-air story

told in sign by the hands
of a late winter clock.
On the first night of the last day of us,

I found myself under the hull
of a swift-going ship,
and remembered the wake

of the first hundred years,
a remembered everything
sitting astride mind.

Now, warming at the belly of a heavenly stall,
I am bride to our impossibility.
Convince the sorrow to come home to us.

Farewell to the rose hunt
and the vine of our evasions.
Farewell to the voyage of childhood's

gratuitous extremities—
the few minutes of matters
in an eternity of hours,

high spheres and little girls in light—
I will wholly measure our beginning,
and liken it to all particulars.

[4]

At the final possession of the wonder with name,
out of its usual beauty, a flock of new sketches,
short cloaks of color and an acre of light.

In the prayers at harvest,
the crops and soil are silent,
and in the great moor-plain, an accidental contact—

our shame had a shawl on its shoulders
in a field without the possibility for return.
When we glean we do not wear the river

nor speak about the sea.
One type of temple opens into the symbol,
another is the symbol.

Roots of the bronze milkweed,
rings for his toes and grain for the gold,
betrotted to the grass of word-thought,

blank pages for the seeds' satisfaction,
bells in white robes and a transept of flowers.
This span of heaven meets my two hands

with two hands—honeyfists of words
on the stages of yet to yes
at the tip of the tongue's fire.

The harp of your nature is
the great page overhead.
Seize all sounds.

[5]

My bones were made of light
in an earth as difficult and soft
as an egg of time. In them,

a terrible ache, an ice-floe of
the once-was. I remember the early
snows of silence, when words were sloughed.

To begin with the middle of rock,
a being-bearing outward.
The bird sings beneath us

as we wait for a cup of rain. Everywhere is
the blanket of is
and the roar of the pen,

the written leap and loss
down-river, into play and ponds.
The way-over is rough, and beneath, the flow.

Trunks everywhere, and everywhere their branches.
I hang my vision on the tip and leap
while the other side of me

sits here, a different pasturing
of pleasantries, a gorgeous
bucket drawn down, with nothing

but the rope hauled up.
All thoughts erased: plates full.
The mouth of my river swallows hunger.

Mind still.
We have tea in transparency.
A broken branch in a dog's mouth.

All the trees bear your arms to me.
All the sky toasts the love of us.
We are an infinite yes between ourselves.

A prairie of towels.
The shade-arm reclining, a head-rest beginning.
Of the last colors, I choose you.

At the first hill, I choose you.
Of this face in the rock, I say nothing.
Your light of day, my twin toward night,

we are the same rock
on which we are.
The page turns and the next letter opens,

and then the breath
and then we are a home of us.
The dog plays, a carnival of fur and leaping.

A pine cone still green on the tree
becomes a pine tree within the pine.
Here is the palm of us, outturned;

having said this, closed.
Having read this, opened.
Hieroglyphics of you, folded like sheets

as a trunk grows from the bed of its years,
another wealth of what-was, still-here.
The day begins its bridge

back to the beginning
with an arbor of stars,
the hand-made door,

and the crest of your yes, casually slipcovered.
We share a slice of bread, unbuttered,
and I leave to gather branches.