

## HOWLED AT THE MOON FELT GOOD

*with two lines by Adrienne Rich*

When the lake in the morning renders belief  
that the water moves in one direction only, that  
you know better than the current or the wet life  
mass below, and then, the next day, there it goes away,

confounding habit. The altar of firs, the just-paved  
dirt road, the eagle's nest and the feeder creek have always  
been a poem to you, a blood-warm mantra, a way to talk  
to yourself. Now, the deer is born scarlet-

maned, the night wolf a hollow of lens, the sunrise a film  
on the martini, the lioness the woman you love  
most, her will the crepuscular animal, as brief, as  
inimitable. There is a man you know you want to

murmur this record along with you, his stature and hull,  
his silent breath before the hearth, his heartbeat  
the whisper of oar in water. He counted with you: An  
exaltation of larks, a clamor of rookies, a comedy of novices.

Each day diminishes like the song you loved the most,  
the long magic hour, the silvery beer-ridiculous nights  
into dawns: it's trauma polka-dotted exhilaration, but the sister  
who comes to your shoulder is here and so is the reverie she

met you to mama-bird, the bracelet she gave you with  
her wrist still in it, a version of yourself only she portended,  
the brothers who tolled like the moon on a string,  
who asked old canoes to waltz for you, who made

you weep and in it accessed your own opalescent  
lakeshore, *this thick*, you tried to make them understand  
or they you, *don't look away*. It was regret's opposite; everyone  
who destiny had named to voyage arrived at the mouth

of the odyssey and howled in affirmation, unkempt hearts  
and hair, pitched necks back to the moon, linked elbows  
and feet first into the water, *don't you know I'd do  
anything for you*. The truth as she spoke it in the beginning

bona fide still: Out in a country with no laws or language,  
whatever we do together is pure invention.

## THE MANY

I.

I won't answer the question. I equivocate. I explain

How the autonarration became a deafening strain  
on the island, an elevator; the abandoned bodies colluding like a  
tether, the fester, tensile pressure

*Happy Hestering*

in the gabardine haze, to a lengthy girl and the company she keeps  
in the staid building bodies

How reliable punctuation begins to fall short of her goals somehow;  
not a catastrophe  
but cause for concern. Self-awareness always the priority.

A transposition—

armies at attention on addiction to cities

Or something extravagant in rhythm, opacity, like  
the swoop between telephone poles/  
the genius, the sophist: her prize, her prince.

The question was she:  
Who was this June Manhattan, & what did she want of me?

Savage tenure, the bronze-burned declensions of grief. The pyrrhic.  
Newing is slow.  
I resent it.

Next came the plain  
is painful.

(Toward the end, I imagined myself dead in a parking lot.  
I imagined who would attend to the scene.)

How I discern the coronae but fail to remember;  
A Styx of a tightrope or the Pacific Coast Highway  
the reporter's shorthand for ruptures & shore

& the bad sandy part where the seawreck returns,  
Richian dredge, typhoon smile or sundown

over kitchens gone by, apartments asunder,  
a Bay Bridge situation & its swoop, too.

Migration in rouge, grey the hyphen's bridge—  
the river Truncate  
under a pair of  
oars, the dinghy's wings.

Is treeless, is without hills. West not East, not Midwest.  
Be plain.

The topographer, the rye fields, the voyeurs  
they hid. Or syncopate shadows, illusive future: how it comes  
& completes. It comes, a state, a heaviness.

Ribbon on the bomb. A Mexicana painter,  
the vogue of her.

The gloves again, the coveting.

I mean to say a transposition of state. Phase change.  
A woman as a nationable thing, mine blanched in length,  
in autopsy, white as a sniper or the pacifist's heir,  
or the violas' evening, or the wood duck as signifier, Mr. Senator, or a  
whisper of rush in God's lock: white terrifies.

*Many are trapped for hours in darkness & confusion.*

Reliable mess: a film of sand on the steno-pad page;  
an ampersand less certain, & California.

The narrator used to be a diarist in the window./  
Watermarked journal red velvet rapt: re-self-reification, a knot.  
Her neck and collar hollow on the cover.

Your flame in me/ the vapour trail/ cash in the vegetable drawer,  
another battered catalogue of consciousness:

a) The rock. b) The layers of shale. c) Chasing the story. d) Race.  
e) Loath is also correct. f) The pin-up's leer from the refrigerator  
door, g) the door again, the wall, scarified.

The oneiric echo from the living room, a room where we live.

(Note: Best to have *less* stuff. The more matter collects, the less there is to talk about)

It starts as a murmur, a touch of  
sand in the veins. It becomes more urgent.  
Once you see it, you can't stop seeing it.

There were no  
women there.

As for me, I put the unction in dysfunction: the house is a mess.

They're coming  
to California, just as I have, as many blondes before me.

Far the beach the journey, coastal inversion:

That which is found, is found.  
It does not sacrifice a value.

Carraway, Isherwood, the narcissist narrators were of *value*  
despite a certain sympathy for decay.

II.

Perhaps we were the reading between disaster's lines;  
perhaps disaster read between the lines, & found us.

The impulse to confess

the evil details, their devil

as the names degenerate into mondegreens  
despite the advances made in harnessing light

*I thought you said*  
*I thought you said*  
*You thought I said*

To be plain. An effort.

Tethered together by scent:

The heart to slice, & the jarring absence of mortal pain at changing seasons./  
O estuary lovesong, how the bicycle's start mimics beating wings.

Images, icons dashed upon the rocks,

*it is useless waste, that edge.*

Name names. Become a name.

What language did

is seed

III.

We stay up & talk & talk—

The next time we are all together, I want us to say this poem out loud.

It is what I have always wanted. A native language.

& I say, say to the spectral voices:

When you pursue the gargoyles on the parkway I am with you,  
& when you stroke the curling grass, that uniform hieroglyphic, indeed  
I am with you, & when you are in your sanctum, rent in devotion, you know I am yet  
with you, & in the kitchen, lacerating your spice root or  
vegetable or animal flesh, by the window, in its stich & presence,  
I am still with you.

You, phantom limbs.  
I have called you each by name &  
I have watched your color transpose each year more.  
Bound free.

A fever of poetry, & an answer:

*If this is how I had to go to find you,*

*Then this is the way I will go to find you.*

Is learning to write about something other than winter;      dirty Bay  
light      & the December memory of the ponderous lumbering river.

I never told you:      one storm I stood on the roof at 113<sup>th</sup> St.  
& watched the Hudson *roil*

The detritus of conversation, the blondes gone by. A tremulous vibrato,  
a taxi ride from Harlem to Prospect. Prospect to

Mission.        Ridding the traitor shakes.        None amidst the dramas of  
a chicken in the oven, a tedium of boxes, the fair on the Vineyard,

Power complexes:        On a sunny day the kite dances at the sun  
like a bull at a matador. Other is not        that stomach taxed by the electric

presence, the tension of the mere        shared sense of a room, a clutching  
reduction of *cigarette to secret*,        reincarnated remains:

*Be it as though I am with you./*

*(Be not too certain but I am now with you).*