

Contains five poems

The Things I Could Do With 2580*

Once I have the code, a lock lures me.
I can do whatever I like.
That was a lie.

A witch's smile to cope with, I follow the garden
Path, the smell of herbs on one side
To cook with, stuff I don't need on the other.

I've come to the threshold, that admission of shyness.
I don't remember what I came for.

Here are children that welcome me.
Their spoons clink out my insecurities.
Chink chink chink: Love me.

Goodness springs open my arms.
But I never really got interested, you know?
Perhaps because they aren't mine.

I've gotten a little too adept
At being disappointed.

If trespassing means anything without the privilege --
What exactly has been given?
Teach me frugal habits of discontent
And I could be happy.

Once the lock's broken, the ground is a lying monster.
Around is a sea
Of poppies, that feed their mouths like bells
Ringing -- still.

Now stop dreaming. Go round the back.

Lapping 2

One day I fucked him and he liked it
And again we did it and it was so good
Like the sea did by us: pulling
And withdrawing and again on the attack
And love submersed us but didn't wipe me out
Even if the wave almost broke our back;
Now I have the movement, the rollicking
Down pat, and I don't mind to be his prey;
So long as I have my body and it surges
Like a sea, inland and outbound, shallow
And deep, let time do its clownish work
And intelligent people try to reconstruct;
Nothing I write is as fun or as important.

When I Was Very Young I Sold My Body

(after William Blake)

When I was very young I sold my body
For a sack of potatoes in the back of a lorry
And my mother, not having enough, told me
To go abroad and we were both very sorry.

I shyly advanced to the front of a desk
Where a rough man, not unkindly, said: "Undress."
Peering through my flanks, he let his pen rest
And said I was an elf, thank Ma, I was blest.

He put me in a box next to little Jules
Who cried all night because of no English
But it helped when I showed her the deadbolt
That protects us from the street smirking fools.

One day when a guest didn't want to budge
I pressed the alarm, whereupon Dev made a fuss;
His pumped-up arm pushed him into the gracht
And the whole Oudezijds came to watch.

But Dev, however caring, and mutually liked,
On days when the blood came early to collect
He'd say I'd look great if that were a potato sack;
Still he took money and munched my apple cake.

In the dark, rubbers sans pressure under the mattress,
The swans caressed by the water, aimless,
And my arms tired, shameless, my thoughts under duress
I think how long, how long, and don't want to rise.

The Lost Day

In the calm sway of the day train
Where the journey starts, whence the journey ends
The forced boredom makes you go out of your mind
When you hear the brother and sister prattling.

Now you can no longer read your book
In your obsession with meaning,
And a long dark tunnel where nothing can be seen
Whisks you coldly underground.

You're supposed to talk to them
About the things you'd love to see
Once you get to Florence, and you'll be free
From the chatter in the noiseless rush.

The grey lakes do not doubt your eyes
And now, partition widening,
Insane for those lakes, to be at one
With the earth, you close your eyes.

I Want His Tenderness

I want his tenderness
In a small handbag, its sticks invisible, compact like a
Rolled-up hedgehog
That I fold out into a handy sunshade
When I go to the beach, and it spreads
In the afternoons
And gets longer
And keeps spreading long after, deep
Into the night, blending into
The stars at a distance,
But in the morning it has folded back into its small handbag.

I want his voice
So full of cheery goodwill
When he asks me what I like in the golden canyon
Where the shoppers look at us amazed
Buying a few trinkets,
I fumble and find nothing to want,
Because his voice when it clinks and drops
Into my heart's pocket is dearer.

It's great, isn't it, when you don't need to rummage
Through a messy drawer,
Don't need to beat a gong,
Or start a car,
And you don't need to equip yourself for an expedition
To the North Pole, before you get a kind word?
I can save myself the journey
(Though I've already made it, of course),

His meekness gives right here, bubbling up,
Without anybody asking,
Like the Well of Lovers, or so the legend goes,
In the desert sun, hanging back gold-
En through the palm leaves.
Almost winter
When we were caught, talking, face to face.