

Can you imagine?

I could've been...

What?

*Anything else, she says and smiles, old
Dreams peeking, like starlight
Through dark nights.*

If my life had been different...

How?

I might have become...

Who?

*Anybody else, she says and sighs,
Just not me.*

But why?

*Her voice is flat and,
Like her urgent dreams
Bleached by sunlight,
Ugliness stays rooted
Deep inside her,
Always remembered,
Never forgotten.*

*If only I'd lived
In another era, she says.*

When?

*Just not then.
Or born in another place.*

But where?

*Oh! she wails, now conjuring up
Figments of fancy.
Anywhere but there.*

No, I can't imagine...

Dreaming at Dawn

*Released once again, a grassy island
Balloons out of the darkest gravity of sleep,
And suspends, in a hover, between the
To-and-fro lanes of a dead-end street, while*

*A canopy of leafy oaks shades the faces, making
Them indecipherable by the half-light. With
Nothing to do but wish away their days, they
Remind themselves of Seurat's painting*

*Of La Grande Jatte, where blue, soft, shallow
Pointillist waves lick at the sandy shore and
Rustling, spring leaves urgently whisper
In the sun-filled air: remember, never forget*

*The watery ring, the deep moat that surrounds
The isle, where worn-out soles traipse the mud, and
Eyes in gaunt, hungry faces, peer through barbed
Wire fences, while choppy, thunderous clouds gather*

*And race ominously across a tormented sky. From
An abyss below, a brilliance winks up at her,
Sparkling through the murky depths. It's her
Great-grandmother's long lost necklace laced*

*With diamonds and pearls. Staring down at the
Blackness, an apparition materializes. As if from a
Recurring dream she has willed herself never to forget, a
Fisherman is at her side. He drops his line into the muddy
Pit, hooks the jewels, and as they emerge, dull with dirt, they're
Transformed—like stones of recollected memory—into a
Shimmering wreath; but then she discovers a forgotten, a raw
Emptiness, where once a gold bead had always gleamed.*

And all at once, a baby's cry ruptures the dream.

Autumn sunlight flickers through the woods.

*A sudden gust cyclones a carpet of dead leaves
Into the air, plucks off the remaining few still
Stubbornly welded to their mostly bare branches,
And swings her knitted scarf across the front
Of her buttoned-up pea coat, like a woolly
Pendulum to the phantom clock that ticks
Its unceasing, loud rhythm inside her head.
She unleashes her two dogs and watches them
Scamper away, chasing each other over the newly
Fallen red and yellow leaves that crackle
And scatter under their grey and white paws.*

So peaceful, so perfect a picture.

*The air is cool, the wind brisk, her cheeks rosy.
But suddenly everything changes and
She imagines herself a puppet on a string,
Floppy limbs hung taut, her
Painted smile, wooden, fixed.
Then, without warning, the string gives way,
And she's plunged deep into an abyss where,
Lost in a moment of darkness, she must hang on,
As if for dear life, and cling to the threads of her
Heart's loves: enigmatic patchworks of
Lust and confusion.*

Relationship, *she yells up to the sun, the sky, the bare treetops.*

How smoothly the word rolls off her tongue:

Soft, sturdy, easy.

The dogs come racing back to her,

Nuzzle their clammy noses to her thighs.

She laughs.

Off with you, she says, your names aren't relationship.

And throwing out a stick,

She watches them run for it,

Tumbling over each other as they go.

But relationships aren't always soft and sturdy,

And they're never easy.

So, why wasn't a more complicated word invented?

A Thought for the Moment

So much to learn

& so little time.

Is fulfillment near?

Or is it a never-ending

Process?

Is there a final realization?

Or is one realization only the

Basis for another?

I wish I knew.