

the king

halcyon castle, stone blue shadow
rich velvet-draped red smoking
roaring beasts of fire, logs, andirons, ash
nomad flickering up three walls
toward memory of wood

sturdy chairs of former oak, fine
carved feet splay at harvest table
long with succulents, meat reposing
platters ready in the dim
blur of goblets shadow dance

a night of wine, bald jokes
youth wrench and knock
old age broods the slits of windows
speculate the day to come
burgeoning king must lay his people down

a hunter appears below
she knows the roots of wood and meadow
leaves of air and water
berries at the border of the forest and the grass
she calls the streams alive and clear
the animals strong, woods healthy

dawn grey plenty brings a pot atop the fire
to boil a breakfast stew the fragrant oats
bubble up and over spilling
froth upon the fire
discolored scum that waits outside for scour

the king and his compatriots take bowls
seat and talk about the day
the troubled land
the business of the folk
the hungry currents of a maelstrom

the hunter brings a sack of berries
dried and offered from the land
and says add them to the morning stew
it won't boil over

now the king is travelling roads
to meet people
one by one, gaunt faces smudged
to find why hunger exceeds toil
contingency is plundered

the crops are down, the rain too harsh
the mildew vein has taken leaf
to brown and left the white to soften
rotting in a soil of worms and grubs
and flying things that rise the sun to mist

fences keep the sheep intact
pastured goats trample grass and bleat
empty cows with no horn scatter
chickens squabble on stone wall
pigs wallow mud

we fear a tide against the life
our houses sit on, rooted manifest
patient strategy is aged
toothless in its inability to compensate
resilience turned brittle

the king follows all the talk
hears the women speak thin wool
watches children petulant with dogs
sees men repair mounds of plows
watches troubled birth of pigs

a pool is what we need, he thinks
a shining depth that yawns filaments
magic springs that come to surface
bringing life into the water
breath into the air

long slender trees pass his journey
to the castle back to chair and sit
his thinking days on end
with guardians deep advice
and walls of tales of tapestry

bowl of porridge before a window
steaming spoon in hand he praises the chef
whose masterful simple skill
keeps all friends strength surpassing
afternoon metabolism

how can I bring to life these slices to my people
what solvent to their weariness
what answer morning doldrum
the king walks his courtyard
eyeing stabled donkeys
ready bridled snorting horses

how do you do so little work
he asks the chef, to keep such food
at table, and yet the pots so clean
I see you spice and stir
and wait apportioned time
and yet you sleep all morning
cause the afternoon for plan
and don't begin to cook till night

the chef draws breath reply
and speaks the hunter's tale
subsistence in the land of tree
and swale of verdant plant and foraged game
and all of nature synchrony

this ease she says is learned through years
aspiring general skills whose wisdom
includes laws of land
the reason given all
and birthright common sense

the king decides things must change
elopes on horse
to pasture with his people
declares a permanent holiday
from tedious ritual
fenced crops
mordant livestock
churned holidays
finds nature the answer to disease
openness circles closure
myth the balm to fear and worry

people thank the king
for release from square footage
but they say
we knew all along
that the way to peace
was symbiosis with oak, beech, hickory, and chestnut
comfort of hazelnut, blackberry, blueberry, elder
rocket and choke and seaberry
ducks that wander pool and grass
chickens browsing leaf and insects
sheep tending sedge and timothy
goats minding dock and bramble
cows who herd lush pasture
horses who eye the long plain
people walking oats and rice

the king rides home to cast away
all checks and balances
laid out in a purifying fire
soon a coil of single smoke
tower castle stone in trade
for arcing sun and moon

wait

sitting with the day
that goes so slow
in geologic time
and in another eon
will be done
and old
but at the now
in so many colors
and places
the unknown pushes up
and needs to grow
and only wants
the days
to curl around
its spreading
fingers

wind

eyes to the wind, skin to the sun,
mountains around, heart of stars.
green leaves, running brook,
brown stems, dark forest
stirs at night.

radiant dawn, yellow meadow grass
whispers "breeze, follow",
so I go
headlong into the woods and up
past boulders, thicket, moss
saplings, mosquitoes, birds
then reach the top.

sky so far and blue,
earth stretches out past lakes and
other mountains.
fall asleep to open cloudless rustle,
tomorrow's light leads through trees
deep long sun.