

FORSYTHIA

1

Shallow spring & the great act fails
The forsythia freezes
A half-dozen buds on each of several stems
Which for them means a weak few
& then summer
& likely leaves crimped to the red stems
Which then will spread

2

Sunlight & eventually
A white-blue bold jay will come here jumping
Dividing the right claw from the left
Shaking everything then rustling busily
Settling his wings

3

Which may allow your glance
No more
To pass over this
No more than a simple thoughtlessness
That opens endlessly
One of several inanities

4

One mistake is that you forget
You think you can go everywhere
In essence

5

As presentiments of every far-off moment
Your wings close
You dive on the far side of the moon in the dust

Blind to your sweepings

6

In the dry grey dust
Where you are still bathing
& beaking about to find whether the forsythia's
Fallen buds are perhaps still edible

7

But the joy of you is
That of unforced coupling
As when you knew only impersonal hatred
Which then was the only thinkable sort

8

& you remain oblivious of any fence
However high it might be
While intimation seems to run so certainly
As if upon unblistered feet
Painlessly

9

& nowhere does the gate within open

10

But there are knitted strings
& straw perched in the eaves
& birdcalls from before you were born
When everything was a waking woman
& a blessing spoken

11

& then the opening after
& the man & woman were turned out

12

Still they are still here
Out in one of the fields
A field with an open gate
Dull & shadowed by low clouds

13

& the gate is forgotten in its own rejoicing

14

For our rootedness began in this dull field
Where we were rows upon rows
& where we did multiply
& there is nothing to be done
With any account of us

15

& the essence outside us grows still
& there is no guilty feeling

16

It is coming to its end here

17

The familiar shrinking of the creek in summer
& the silence of the perching jay
As it sits quietly going nowhere in the heat

18

That heat & how you will become uncertain you know anything
The watery dull stream & the plucked corpse on its bank
The dust & how you stared at it again

From one level of your adult stature
& the blood dried newly brown
With no way to change this
The armies of streaming ants
The drill and business then in the jay's heart
As it lay before you
As once the silence of a single woman spread
Without price

19

The silence of the jay sinking thinning flattening
To a papery essence
Blindly lifted at one edge by the wind

20

You will have forgotten you found anything in this field
& the forsythia is both red & green
& yellow

21

& the light of the moon is reflected

TABLE-SCARF

22

You have no art
That is not artless
As I do not
You forget that
& you are never unsure

23

With no obligation to me
That were no matter

24

That turns out to be true
& is inoperative
Here for you

25

As dawn brightens
I have to doubt a bit the marriage of all others

26

There is in this place
No vow even to living a lie
I dislike the fact of it the lie
Whoever I might fool with it
I can never hear it in your voice
Mornings short & square

27

Losing none of your blunt
Compartmentalizations

28

A phone holding its numbers flips open
Here it's mine
Just let go
Your hold on it

29

As dawn passes letting
A rose-water into the mind
Mushy & slow
Beginning to give or lay claim
To some fairer existence

30

At the door I slide under your eye
My weakness
Dawn your end
Which of us is trickier

31

You come past me as a checkpoint
In your world which is multiple
Duplicitous
Your low-clouded sky
You gaze down
Is never going to live openly

32

For the moment we don't have the means to
So you attend to the flight of dawn
The moon shining down by its great leave
Green & silver & pink & white

33

No alarm ever just sleeping & laze
& messing up a clean counter
& now waking again & there I slip
With half a season of waiting & leading
& letting slide
Returning too late
Or you turning your back

34

Did I find a number once & was it
The washing machine's fault
Did you blame the washer
Yes you did
That or the window before you
Saying the small hedge was

35

& then took it back
You can always summon something
With unchanging ease
& look forward to a place
A next one
I believe there is a next place
Never where we rejoice in living
With so little
Such lost time

36

Closed & enclosed
Little--our life as I call it

37

Kept to strict understandings of whatever

38

Dawn when the albas rise
When you answer
In mind of one who is going to
Put his shoulder to the sun

39

You hear it
Inside your own head
Intent & square
Short impossible
Transgressions
All imaginable

40

I have my imagination
It is what I have
& my head is closed
& I have forgotten what to say
Or think to say
This is familiar
& I want never to say my piece
Where I go
What shoes I wear
Whose body of effort
Or how it felt
Or how our several wars
Ended once entirely
With the last slip
Before quietude
Or how breath left off
Or how abnormal that was
Those few times
I don't like to tell

41

Abnormal
One hand loose within the other

42

Or the ornamental tree
I saw how little it changed
Over eight years' seasons
Its weeping branches hung
With red fruits
Or the small flashlight I gave you to use
The narrow beam of it
Its watery movement
How it lit your way
So it was your way
So you were alone with it
& free to sleep anywhere
To evade nightmare

43

A season inside
Or with the embroidered table-scarf
Were no matter

44

I wondered
With the tree bowed with fruit
Lay in my sheet
As if non-existent
Cold came
Rain came softly then
Then snow
Then sleet's sound

45

I did think my heart stopped that time
Uneasy it forgot delight
Tracked the dark
That rose across your face as others re-entered your mind

As the phone rang

46

Watched the song of sweeter Sirens spill
Over your ear
As you looked away

47

I did hear singing & the embroidered table-scarf
Was nothing to speak of

48

As you spoke softly to re-set & replace
One slipping away piece

49

So sleep lay far off
Where once
I was immortal
& now this

50

Dawn & unease
A welcome silence after the chorus
The winter wrens make
Where I am
Eternally here
To hear them