

Reading Li Shang-yin: Falling Flowers

*Even you shaking myself out of the dust
of all I need you*

*the differences, the terrible birds
you have quit my high pavilion*

*the shadow of you
the shadow of me being*

*so many days a complicated darkness
down there in the garden*

*down there where the terrible shadow we were
is stepped on now by those birds, so awkward they are,
princes of the air clowns on the ground
preposterous feet*

*the shadows come down to us only, sometimes
as this morning, of course missing you,
not only you, not only me
missing you,*

*a shadow missing a part of itself, the dingy
quality the light has when it has no shadow to cast or
long waisted low slung*

*you have come towards me
equal to being born in aspect
of engagement,*

*after the clandestine espousals
of life with death
they called the blue flower*

in no one's hand,

how sumptuously you stretched
on my couch

every muscle a remembering,
by truth to rouse,

or ruse, or lull, or con
the Great Reader into highly specific acts of Oblivion,
our life is his amnesia.

Smooth of the hip
socketed in the cup of the hand,
the weight of,
a pendulum closeness
to the gravid earth *below*

to be born inside
finitude where the *flowers* grow—
whose color are they?
meek by dint of memory

astir in fire?

Writing to track what reading has in mind.

Scattering on your breast
the petals of wantfulness,

the blue tone snug so deeply
in the red

so that the sunset

knows you,

you here among the eternity of conversations
and so few of them wet tongue-tip to your
quiet breast,

a garnet

holds that color also

to the base of your spine, a current
the women of old spoke

to their sons a little bit

and to their daughters much,
language,
language of the west
lewd grammars of a nomad people,
for in my thought I have caressed
the sacred geomantic precincts of your body
my hands heavy with grease
from just such alien sheep. Wool pull,
flowers nibbled, not bright animals
hoofing through your garden, your air,
I hear the crows
adventuring the little left
after life the silver snow
to them
in a full moon time
is given,
I wait for you, comfort of your body beside me
as if suddenly an old man inside me
strung with that yearning
to pluck tone
song
as from the bones of the body sounded
and all our torture just that music
muscle,
wound, sound, wound,
the knell of beast comfort moving
to take possession of this carrion mind,
clearing,
like a procession of Grail knights
disappearing, violet line into falling snow fading,
and yesterday I saw the garden wall, old bluestone slabs,
the shale cut to slates, the marble steps
broken, all broken, brick wall
bent under the bare lianas of wisteria, the root stocks

twisted in cold evening, all lilac
was the east then
across the whole little world
from that setting sun
fallen past the hemlocks,
the contra-sera even-pale,
isolate woodpecker also
from before us *flown along the river of air*
they apprehend (we don't)
we know not that we know not,
base metal
we have scotched our gold with,
endured with
cunning when we might have thrived with openness
exulting,
o it is not nothing
to have a red flower on my windowsill
in such weather,
whose many petals, still red, dry
and fall
onto the blue tile kitchen floor,
and to crush
gently enough one leaf of it
releasing
from flexile structure one scent of *form*,
as from the *twisted dike* of matter a leak of sense.
To smell a geranium
in winter
is better
than all the bergamot
of the Midi,
be with me
though
to savor it.

I want your side
to me, my hand
 between your thighs
 escorting
the warmth of you,
 after,
 into sleep.

Dusk. We have *passed into distances*
 of each other, swayed in blue ferryboats
 across bitter cold straits,
 and there was always
 someone near us, a bravo smoking cigarettes, and that too
virginia was a kindness to remind.

 Compassion. Compassion,
in the faded light, I reach for your return
who never left me,

 the world
is not made of partings,
 brass farthings,
 she goeth forth
 with her sweetie
to endure
 these new
winter nights
 with brainless screwing

but the separations
 of which I am master
 are far other,
it is a matter (a scatter)
 of the metals
 cinnabar and copper
and what is left of me
 when love absterges

the newsworthy patinas
your kisses left
and everybody knows it
I am your man,

and so in faded light I ask her, she is my colors, I reach
for where she is and where she's going

and on the phone Joan tells me
how Lana has run off with Erica
midwinter, Tivoli disaster,
pale fiancées of a wanton star.

I reach I reach

my life
is all about reaching
into wherever it is dark, wherever, wherever,
and listen! the children
of the night! their music!

I tell her, Dear one, reach
for her return. She tells me: I will never
take her back,

for all her cheating
was a wound

in the flesh of my *time*, and time
that heals all else, has no way to heal itself—

our years she took
six years

and spent them,

this is our winter's tale,

lukewarm tea and shiny petals of our polaroids
torn up and scattered on the floor
before the dead fire in the hearth,

and when we love
what thing is left

that shapes the shadows

even of our house,
so that doorway
in it
is only about her coming through?
I have torn
the images
of the life she tore
*and still can't bear
to sweep them away.*