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**THESE MATTERS MUST BE MEASURED
ON CORRECT SCALES**

For silver, gold, and precious stones

Troy Weight:

¼ carat = a single grain

2 dozen grains, one pennyworth—

of which twenty will comprise that ounce
in sapphire, pearl, or bullion
to be exacted of me every night
by my expensive dreams.

For potions, drugs, or poisons

Apothecaries' Weight:

20 grains = one scruple

3 scruples, one dram—

I measure carefully for the deep
eventual cost of sleep.

One scruple, even a grain, could shift

my balance, tip the sensitive beam

against all prior dream of voices

coming to me in decibels of light
but slower than light—

so that time seems to hold false

like the skip of pulse

between the telling of a word

and what is heard.

Virginia Elson

TWO POEMS**Letter From Brooklyn**

“Mrs. Rosen,” thirty years ago a warden of
a Nazi extermination camp, was recently
recognized by two of her former prisoners,
in New York, and subsequently arrested.

Thirty years
I've lived here safely, but
Today a look of recognition

Stopped me, as if
Out of the corner of my eye
I'd seen drapes rustling,

As if rolling over
In bed, I'd seen a spy
Instead of clothes on hangers.

I know that woman, all of them, they say,
“He vanished so fast . . . the water
Was left running. Upstairs, footsteps

Scattered like dropped silverware.
We fled like roaches.” So did I,
I changed my name, dyed my hair,

Yet recognition spread, a bruise
Across her face. Whispers
Seep under my door like gas. What now?

A porcupine in a taxidermist's box,
For every needle on my back
A murdered Jew. She lifted the lid and shined

A flashlight on my terror—
I'm stuffed, packed away
In sawdust, but today she saw
The pupils of my marble eyes contract.

For Joshua

You count years on your fingers. Now you're four.
We've a cake and candles, ribbons, chewing gum,
A brush and jars, like rainbows, of thick color,
Marbles like cloudy planets at your thumb.

I'll start profound but end in common sense,
I'm moved to make a wish in your honor
Against a birthday, maybe decades hence,
When a slightly fishy angel may appear

And whisper, *How is longer life an advantage?*
Look out your door: the tide recedes too fast
For you to scrawl what you should have done,
a message
Sealed in a bottle, and hurl it into the past,

Or, *Men of good will and bad come to the same.*
It's true, good deeds are needles buried in hay,
We light a birthday candle to blow out the flame,
Valleys surge up and mountains erode away

Yet men rise not an inch, Pisces the Fish
Has swallowed his fill and struggles on the shore.
But before you shut your eyes and make your wish,
Accept, as blood, these words, and mark your
door:

Like others, I've observed gray sidewalks cracked
By grass. Some find a moral, as well we might,
Such as, *The mask breaks at the smallest act*
Of life. The blank, blank mask, If they are right,

That likeness in the street is yours and mine,
 Breathing dust in, 'laughynge with oon eye
 And that other wepyng.' And every time
 The mouth questions, and one ear hears reply,

The other hears, between the words, a hush.
 By which I mean that, as our masks are drying,
 We can let the colors stiffen on the brush
 Or let love billow like a paint-drop dyeing

Water in a glass. This hasn't sufficed
 As evidence that we should wish, should say,
Bless the day that I was born. But, Christ,
 It seems so right, it seems so right today.

Gjertrud Schnackenberg

THE DANCER ON THE WALL

The friendship quilt, patch-work
 for my bedroom wall, to present
 with one green and orange leg
 the present dance, dances, yes,
 with one gold leg above my bed,
 one pink leg, one pink chance,
 in careless violation of the land-
 -lord's lease, which plainly says:
 no nails/ no late guests/
 no dancing on the walls.
 He should only live so long.
 The illicit patches pirouette
 above my head, above her head,
 on floral satin legs of chance.
 One velvet leg out-stretched
 a different leg, a different dance.

Kenneth Fifer

ENERGY BURNING

father
its true
i swear
the wire
tap picked
up clear
wet messages
trapped inside
the heart stream
hiding
from the air world
cowering
in blood net vessels
afraid to let go
with flying
father/ flow
words must fly
let loose fly
and fly invade
the suffocation
with electric shocks
of steaming breath
let loose
words must bear out the body
in all its truth
overtake space and height
marked advance
marked flight
father
words must soar
in speed currents
brandishing sun
from streaking wings
intone
intone screaming

shout
 and spell out
 soundown
 gotta be found
 free of blood
 free

of twining muscles
 grabbing at the throatsound
 shutting off the wordsound
 drowning

father
 the wire
 tap picked
 up clear drowning

convert to read out

patiently
 i listen to blood

*heart pressure up 20.
 words pump thru thick
 and loud
 echoed noise crowds
 the eardrum
 thumping*

. . . read out . . .

*control and code
 sort out the confusion
 channel clogged with dreams*

i cradle myself carefully
 in cupped hands
 rock myself gently
 with whispers
 to the sun
 poised in hushed suspension

i wait the brain transmission
of the music signal

father
the music sings.
intake
with breath waltzing
i sail my arms flashing
along a deep crescent
once up then downslide
inertia pull
into the upglide
arch sweep
into the zenith ride
release
fingers burst
in rhythmic flourish
scatter words to charge the air
i laugh
squeeze myself dancing
free from blood

the moon glows soft
like friends
i know i see
but cannot touch the light
that streaks the trees
and sweeps me home at night
in quiet talk
then leaves

yes
the mechanic works
at the moon
the mechanic lives
beside the night
im sure.
he never lingers

near the door
that rushes in the day.
yes
im sure
the moon burns soft
like friends

*resolution:
to solve the problem.
to examine energy mechanisms.*

father
im afraid
ill never be free of blood
i cant listen
i dont want to hear anymore

*energy must have a link up.
to pull out the plug
is to go insane,
energy must flow.*

i know
i know
i felt that power sheer
comfort driving
when the mechanic
worked at the sun
triggering signals
to tap the heart
words were said
words were done
let loose
to fly
into the eye of the sun

*in time
in time again*

time buries

in life
in life again

life is buried

crushed under
the plodding weight
of time
life slips away into the time
of movie shows

the same screen
that is energized
with cruel light and dark patches
razor swift flashes
of joy and pain of
dreams and wishes
that seem to be real
is wrapped around my eyes
i cant help but view life as haphazard
mosaic
clicking off frames
(without direction)
of spliced in nightmares
that drain reflection and
consume the energy
poured into words
that no one answered

now there is no answer
to fill my eyes

no one here to shut off the machine
peel away the screen
and head off drowning

the mechanic
works at the moon
with pale energy

close to cold
 so far away
 his world is night
 my world is day
 and i can only fly inside of sleep
 the door that rushes in the day

*plan what words should say
 energy is exact
 pressure is mounting.*

its just that
 the air surrounding me
 strangles words
 sounding me
 before they get off the ground
 i cant condition my heart to speak
 what my eyes see flashed
 on distorted sheets.
 the heart feels through
 the glossy screen
 reaches for texture
 not for letters
 if im not exact
 thats what i mean
 feel beneath the surface
 past arrangement and shape
 into sources of darkness
 and figures of light
 is your world the day
 or do you live in the night?
 no one has answered.

father
 i dont want to listen anymore

energy burning
 burning holes

in the floor
energy burning
burning holes
in the door
want some more
want somemore
wansomore

*heart pressure erratic.
immediately code and control.*

waasomor

code and control

wahsom

immediately

wahso

code and

wah

wah

*immed
con*

wa

wa

*imm
co*

no

fly

no

moon

drown

im

yes father
it hurts to breathe
the words
that force contact
with the air
burn out
fast dissolve
into disappear
their strength
drained thru
the dark mouth of space
that engulfs the distance
between my hands
and the voice
that answers from across the room in disbelief

im afraid to reach
to care
now
speak less
(speechless)
for safety's sake
stuff the last
of the sacred words
into the heart well
where they clot and tangle
with springs and dials

energy wastes away inside
i hear the meshing of bloody gears
tear into sound

drown

i

into dreams
search the dark side of the moon

Harry Purdy

BIBLICAL

So many of us are still so many of us;
My sister, now seventy, looks like my mother did
One morning during the last world war;
My brothers, like my father looked one morning
When the Depression made America different
again.

So many of us will not end this century;
Will not, can not, extend any solving mysteries;
Given what we were, we are the midnight
walkers
Of rooms, making nothing heroic in our times;
So many of us go from crises to nothing
Biblical.

So many of us look no different once again;
An apartment houses us like red winds in rains;
Like birds, dogs, cats, wombats, flametrees . . .
In the open seasons raging into tomorrow . . .
And God said, and Noah, and Moses . . . and my
father.

Harry Roskolenko

TWO POEMS**Wonders of the Invisible World**

A northwest wind has maddened the river.
Waves churn and flatten and lose themselves in ripples—
Swirling in frantic half-circles—
Breaking on the high-banked ice—

Yesterday the river ran swiftly to the east.
Now it plunges everywhere, drowning.

A small brown-painted box rocks in the wind.
It turns from side to side in that nameless tree—turns halfway,
turns back.

Empty, its roofs sloped like the roofs of our house.
Where are the birds? Hidden everywhere.