NIGHT ANIMALS

MARIIANNE MAYS

~ NIGHT ANIMALS ~

A

FLOWER OF NIGHT

OPENING IN ME

AA

NIGHT BEGINS

ME IN THE GLASS

NIGHT KNITS

ME A ROOM

A TINY ROOM

I MUST STAY IN

I SCRATCH AT THE FACE—

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A

NIGHT, WITH ITS COLD CENTRE

BLOOMS IN ME

THIN SKIN OF NIGHT

AA

A SWATHE OF BITTER GREEN

PENETRATES, INVADES MY BLOOD

INTRUDES ON MY THOUGHTS

I SCRATCH AT THE VENEER—

I AM LOOKING FOR SOMETHING

ELEMENTAL

DREAMS OF ART GALLERIES

COLOURS UNDULATING, VAN

GOGH'S LONELY SPECTATORS

I RESEMBLE THE HUMAN RACE*

* *I CAN NEITHER LIVE NOR DIE, NOR AM I CAPABLE OF NOT WISHING TO DIE OR LIVE. AND ALL MANKIND RESEMBLES ME.* ANTONIN ARTAUD, "ON SUICIDE"

A

(WALKING AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

ALONE, MAD IN THE NIGHT

THIS ONE WAY ROAD ONE

MUST WALK ALONE)

AA

BONES AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, DELICATE

WITH WILD GHOSTING AND MEMORY

THROUGH TO THE ESSENTIAL

FURTIVE AND SWEET

SNOUT TO RICH EARTH—

OF COURSE REMEMBER, WE

ARE INVENTED OF

THOSE PARTICLES

A

THOSE WHO WAIT

THROUGH THE NIGHT

ARE ACCOMPANIED BY NIGHT ANIMALS

LOOSE-JOWLED JACKALS

SECRETIVE ELEPHANTS

ANTELOPES WANDERING AND SHY

RED-EYED RABBITS WHO SEE IN THE DARK

AND SPEAK

IN THEIR ANIMAL TONGUES

THREE CATS APPEAR

IN STRICT SILHOUETTE

ON THE EMERALD LAWN

THE VELVET, DEW MANTLED LAWN—

LESS CATS THAN OMENS

JEWELLED EYES SPARK

AA

PRISM OF MY NIGHT

WINDOW, ENCLOSED HERE

TANGLED IN MY SKIN

FLARES AGAINST GLASS PLATE, COLD

MEDICINE

IF I CAN BE CURED: I LOOK FOR CLUES

HERE IN THE WINDOW,

A NIGHT TRAY OF GUAZE AND BANDAGES,

HERE A CABINET OF PILLS

I RIFLE THROUGH, I RATTLE

FOR THE MOMENT I UNDERSTAND

SICKNESS, NOT CURES

WHAT USE IS SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING?

A

THOSE WERE NIGHTS, OUT OF CITY

WHEN I KNEW YOU BETTER

I JOINED YOUR CULT OF FIRE AND EMPTINESS

THE FIRES RAGED

THE BOX BLINKED ITS EMPTY EYES

YOU WERE AWAY YET

I FELT WE WERE VERY CLOSE

(THOUGH I DOUBTED YOU'D BE FOUND AGAIN)

PERHAPS YOU'D BEEN TAKEN

THE WAY YOU'D ALWAYS FEARED

I SEARCHED, FIRST IN THE CITY

WANDERING STREETS, STARING (I'M AFRAID)

AT GIRLS UNWITTING AND SAUCY ON STAIRCASES

HID IN DOORWAYS WHEN INTERCOMS

CLATTERED THEIR SECRETS

INTERPRETED FLAGS IN WINDOWS

AS PROBABLE SIGNS OF YOUR CAPTURE

IMAGINED FREEZERS AND FURNACES

DOING THEIR WORST, INSIDE

FLOORS GAVE EVERY SIGN OF BEING TAMPERED WITH

I WAS SURE THEY WOULD GIVE WAY AND COLLAPSE

THE FLOOR FELL OUT FROM UNDER HER

THEN

OUT OF CITY WHERE NIGHT

WAS ALWAYS IMMINENT AND EVENINGS

CONCLUDED FOR DAYS, FADING

FROM TENDEREST BLUE AND VIOLET

TO INDIGO AND SILENCE

SOME CAR IN THE DISTANCE THREATENING

TO EXPLODE THE MOMENT IT HIT THE HOUSE, DISTANT

HEADLIGHTS AND REVVING KEEPING TIME

WITH THE BLINKING LED CLOCK

WAS THERE A PARTICULAR TIME

YOU'D CALL, I THOUGHT, SOME CODE

I SHOULD DECIPHER

"I AM NOT ENTIRELY MYSELF,"

I SAID. "REMEMBER

THE BLIND SPOT AND ALL THAT,"

YOU'D REMARKED ON LEAVING

EVERYTHING PARTICIPATED IN THIS LOGIC

I FELT A BIT FAINT, WONDERING AGAIN

WERE YOU A FRIEND, AN ENEMY

PERHAPS IT WAS YOU SITTING

IN THE EQUIPED CAR, WAITING

FOR THE RIGHT INSTANT TO DETONATE

A MOMENT CAME TO MIND

IN WHICH BELIEVING IN GOD I'D WATCHED

SMOKE TENDRIL THROUGH LEAFLESS BRANCHES

AGAINST A WINTER SKY

YES, I THOUGHT, JUST SO:

GOD IS A STORYTELLER

(FOLLOWING A KIND EXPLANATION)

NOW IN THE DARK MY FATHER

A SHAPESHIFTER AND I WAS VAGUELY AFRAID

OF WHAT NEXT HE MIGHT BECOME

IN THE DARK I FELT MYSELF

DISSOLVING, ON THE VERGE

OF DISAPPEARANCE: "ONCE I WAS IN LOVE," I NOTED

WEAKLY TO KEEP ALIVE, BODY UNFASTENED

WIND FLAPPING THROUGH EMPTY ROOMS

(WARM HEART IN MY HANDS PULSING)

I WATCHED MY FATHER BECOME

A GULL AND A SQUIRREL AND FINALLY A BEAR

THE HOUSE CAGED AROUND US, WE FOUGHT

FOR UNDERSTANDING IN THE QUIET

WHEN NIGHT FINALLY BROKE, THE MORNING,

INSTEAD OF GLISTENING AND BUOYANT, WAS PONDEROUS—

AS THOUGH WE WERE STILL UNEASILY SHAKING OUR DOUBLES

THE AIR INERT

***

MORNING AND I MOVE CAREFULLY, WORRYING

BACK DOORS, FEARING REMOTE WAYS IN, MY TROUSERS

KEEP SLIPPING, THE TOILET IS LATENT WITH EVIL POSSIBILITIES

GAZING INTO THE MIRROR, MY MOUTH

HATCHES ELECTRIC WIRE AND CROSSHATCHED LINES

MY HAIR HAS BRED A METALLIC STREAK OVERNIGHT

WITH FACE DRAWN

WRITTEN OVER

THERE

EYES INVISIBLE

I'D BURROWED DEEP—

DEEP—

AND IN THE MIRROR A FLICKER

I AM CARRIED AWAY

AA

BONES AT THE EDGES OF ROAD

DELICATE WITH WILD GHOSTING

REMEMBER THROUGH

TO THE ESSENTIAL, FURTIVE

AND SWEET SNOUT TO RICH EARTH

A

YES REMEMBER WE ARE

OF PARTICLE

OF GREEN SWATHE OF

NIGHT FLOWER OF BONES

WE ARE

ANIMALS WE