

NOCTURNE

It's possible you can see someone from
A distance, after all these years, and stop in your
Tracks or do a double take and wonder if maybe
It's just someone who looks like someone
You used to know or if it's the real person and
Then you walk on by like in the song "Walk
On By" and then you turn turn again but the person's
Gone and all you can do is haul yourself
Up to the roof and jump off or shoot yourself
In the foot so that you can't walk can't move
And time hangs heavy as you sit in your room
And wonder if that person was him or you
Or someone's twin who arrived from another
Planet to savor the lilac scent that radiates
From your skin

And the heat comes up from the pipes like *Les
Trois Gymnopédies* by Erik Satie and I turn the key
Without biting my tongue and the heart comes
Back on until it bleeds and I take back with one
Hand what I gave with the other and someone
Comes in off the street no longer invisible
And the kissing booth closes for the night—too
Bad for you—and I display my dishrag abs to
The wind one last time, feel my skin on fire
As I descend

THE MILK WAS SOUR

The milk was sour, but I drank it anyway

You must check the expiration date on the container before you buy it

I spilled the container of sour milk into the sink

The strawberries are moldy, I only bought them yesterday

It's pointless to ruin your life over love for another person

You can always go back to the store and get a refund

I ran out into the rain and went to the store for a container of milk

It's not necessary to wear clothing when you go to the store

No one in the store notices whether you're wearing clothing or not

For some animals the ritual pattern of courtship is a dance of death

Wet streets, the entrance to the bridge, the windows of stores selling
diamonds

Go back to where you started and repeat everything you said

Once I stood where Mao stood and stared down at Tiananmen Square

And once the wind blew me backwards off the Great Wall

DEAR COMMUNARD

The satisfaction of human needs creates new needs
Marx said, just as a poem gives birth to another
Almost immediately after you finish the one before,
So there's no sense of completion and only an occasional
Word crossed out, deleted, "no completion" seems
To be the order of the day.

Something left out calls for its other,
A warm bed is all one needs, and the new poem is calling
But the operator is asleep, and the words are lost
And found again, that's the other theme—the ghosts
Of the past enter stage center, the animals and the street
People line up on the boardwalk, the ocean looms,
Scatterbrained birds of a feather fly south for the winter,
The deletions add up—the Hotel De Ville burns to the ground—
One wing of the Louvre is gone—a mural by Delacroix turns to
ash—

The poem needs some sustenance but no one can
Give enough, that's what I was like when I was younger,
Insatiable, in my own way, so that people thought me strange
For wanting more than I had, but the mystery is in the words
"Never enough"—I might have worn them on my sleeve—
So what do you say we get down on our knees and pray
For some god of forgiveness to man the barricades?
Or do we take it as it is, as it goes, while remaining cognizant
Of what happened down through time,
All the thens and theres mingling with all the I's and yous
Until a direct address is delivered to all of Paris
On the day 100,000 Prussians did a victory lap
Down Les Champs-Élysées—and it all really happened,

Dear Communard.