

## *Holiday Feast*

On a gray earthen plate, painted grass green,  
I have a salad of fragrant bright flowers,  
And from a dish shaped like a sun, its form unchanging,  
Which pours out warm rays of golden honey.  
In another bowl of glass, black like crystals of the night,  
A banana lies yellow, thick, and ripe;  
July soon showers the firmament of that crescent  
With a powder of stars, that fill the universe's sugar bowl.  
From a clear pitcher I drink in sky with foamed clouds—with my eyes;  
The footman-summer holds the sun-pumpkin on his tray.  
I bite with the teeth of my feelings into stolen apples of reddened days  
And in the basket of my heart I hide the peels of memories already eaten.

*October 1, 1931*

*New Year's: A Handmade Greeting Card*

to a young architect

There's a year for you: 1933—  
the elderly look back: "how time has flown by and become the past";  
And I think to myself that soon it'll be 1934  
and that you must be sitting at your desk reviving dead logarithms—  
You surely have glass protractors  
and a steel split compass  
and on smooth, white paper  
you want to detect mysterious proportion—  
flat-unmoving lines grow,  
walls grow out of snobbery and boredom:  
you are probably learning to build houses,  
in which someday people will quarrel—  
I know: you'll place on the house's façade  
arch-ultramodern wheels  
and after a long deliberation with yourself  
you'll paint the slats red;  
they will be fixed across your poetry,  
your houses peopled but empty  
and you will be praised for building so well  
a latrine above the bathroom. —

And I think to myself: yes, yes, there are unwritten laws passing;  
it would be foolish to eat and sleep, if time still stayed in place—  
Soon it will be the year '34,  
but it was the year '32—  
and '32 like skis  
left behind two streaks  
(one in mind left to you—  
the other left to my blood within me)  
both streaks will waver,  
until the wind has completely licked them away.

You formed an arc up to the sky  
you rounded me off with the compass of your heart.  
And now would you still be able  
to build so many miracles into a word?  
and would you now be able  
to measure the world in terms of love  
and in the construction of tricks and arts,  
build up days more beautifully and simply?  
Well—and then you were able to count me  
with the love you were worth—  
well—and then you were a builder  
of castles in the air and houses of cards.  
May they now teach you how to surround melancholy with brick—  
or pagan-hearted temples as formerly erected in my eyes—  
may they teach the cloisters of longing to develop rosemary from  
the heart as from songs  
and eccentric logical and simple rebuild passion from the ruins—

*December 26, 1933*

## *Grammar*

(—and grow into words so joyfully,  
and love words so easily—  
you just have to pick them up and look, like burgundy against the light.)

Adjectives stretch like cats  
and like cats are made for petting  
soft cats warm and docile purr tenderness andante and maestoso.  
Soft cats have lakes in their eyes and green deepweed, herbaceous at  
the bottom.

I look sleepily into the cat's pupils  
*secret and glass and deceptive.*

Here is shape and form, here is the indispensable essence,  
the concreteness of the essence of the thing, material embedded in a noun,  
and the world's immobility and the peace of deadness and stability,  
something that lasts still and is, a word concentrated in the body.

Here are simple *tables* and hard wooden *benches*,  
here, their fibrous tissues are thin and wet *grasses*,  
here is a ginger *church*, which protrudes with the gothic in God,  
and here is the venous arterial simplest human *heart*.

Whereas an adverb is a sudden miracle,  
a surprise of rubbed flints—  
there was something no one knows how  
and now it is *diagonal* and *across*  
and *with both hands* it wraps the thought and it is *surely sad and good*.

And pronouns are tiny little rooms  
where on windowsills grow small pots.  
Each corner—a souvenir from the past  
and they are only *for You* and *for me*.  
This is a secret abracadabra  
laws of the love algebras are flourishing:

I—*that's you, you—that's me* (equation)  
I *without you—you without me*, that's zero.  
We love enveloped by twilights, searching  
in small words as in dresser drawers.  
I, *it's you—you, it's me*. Equation.  
And pronouns are as secret as flowers,  
like tiny, tiny rooms,  
in which you live in secret before the world.  
    (—so just take the word in your hand  
    and look, like burgundy against the light,  
    and grow into words so joyfully,  
    and love words so easily—)

*Explanation in the Margins*

I did not arise  
from the dust,  
I will not return  
to dust.

I have not come down  
from the sky  
and I will not go back to heaven.

I am heaven herself  
just like a vitric ceiling.

I am earth herself  
just like fertile soil.

I did not escape  
from anywhere  
and I will not return  
there.

Apart from myself, I don't know another distance

In the bloated lung of the wind  
and in the calcification of crags

I must  
myself  
here  
find  
dispersed.

*Sacrilege*

Despite your knowledge, I bypassed the shiny statues  
fringed with ropes of shells and shining tiger teeth,  
then I passed idols of polished ivory  
and others sculpted in silver, and others made of brass.  
And what can you do to me, now that I have strayed persistently,  
seeking the heaviest doors and the most winding of passages?

Until in the dark sanctuary, where I misled the guard,  
with your stony despair  
I stood  
face  
to Face.

## *Epitaph*

... And when the dark valley flowed through the dark forest  
sliding over turtles, perching in tall anthills,  
leaping into throbbing streams, falling on the mosses I chased  
your elusive smile that flashed with the mists.

... There is nothing left of your face. Nothing—only your features folded  
in the eye an accessible face, your former face of bones.  
Flying clouds of associations, if they were panicked by the wind  
fell from your features as from mountains so that now I could see them.

... So this is your smile! Blue frigates of memories  
pink frigates of dreams, first spread out to fly,  
they draped it with their sails. So this is your forehead! Your temples!  
Lips! The image of love has covered your lips just this far.

### *In the Battle for Birth*

When the battle is over and the shells of bullets cool,  
you worship victory with white marble and epic.  
And here the battles are fought. The sudden dawn of spring,  
the space will show you growing like a glow,  
the space of beet fields shall show you.  
Let it be praised, flashing and thundering, by your string.

Beneath the strong leaf, deeper juicy vegetables  
with sweetness swelling, alive like your blood,  
when suddenly armor rattles, dark armor cracks,  
the hard, greedy beetle crawls up and grubs.  
The pierced flesh shrivels, rust covers the leaves.  
To arms! Here is the enemy reaching for harvest!

Where will relief come from? Quickly and cruelly  
let him strike at the enemy—no mercy in battle.  
How much light the girls have in their angry eyes,  
when they lead, with festive swinging braids,  
gentle silver hens with soft down,  
bringing relief and future abundance to the fields.

The bird's beak cuts like a bayonet, changes the battle's fate.  
It will preserve the braid and soft feathers in granite,  
may they be praised by the poem's passionate censor;  
for years to come, let a song tell of  
how he raised in these fields of verdant growth  
the course, rugged pathos and the days it made new.

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*Non omnis moriar*—my proud domain,  
Meadows of tablecloths, strongholds of closets staunch,  
Sheets endless, precious linen fabrics  
And dresses, bright dresses will remain after me.  
I will not leave a single heir behind.  
So may your hand fish through Jewish things,  
You, Mrs. Chomin of Lwow, gutsy wife of a snitch,  
Quick informer, mother of a volksdeutscher,  
May these things serve you and yours—  
what good would they do strangers? My dears—  
I pass on no lute, no empty name.  
I remember you, just as you, when the Schupo came,  
Thought of me. Even reminded them of me.  
Let my friends sit down to a chalice  
And drink to their wealth at my burial:  
Tapestries and rugs, platters, candles—  
May they drink the night long, and at the break of dawn  
May they rummage for precious stone and gold  
Amid the sofas, mattresses, quilts, and carpets.  
O, how the work will burn easy in their hands,  
Clumps of horsehair and seagrass,  
Clouds of pillows torn and puffs of feathers  
Cling to their hands, turning both arms to wings,  
And the fresh down, binding with my blood,  
Swiftly turns them to winged angels.