

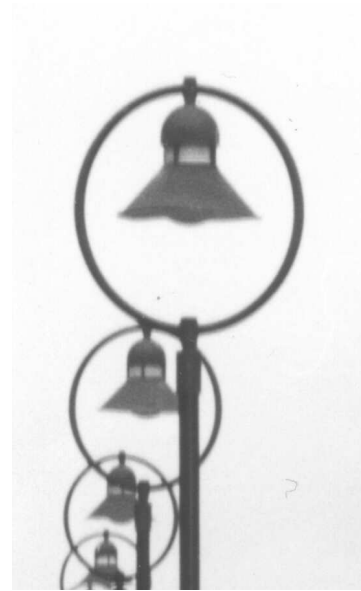
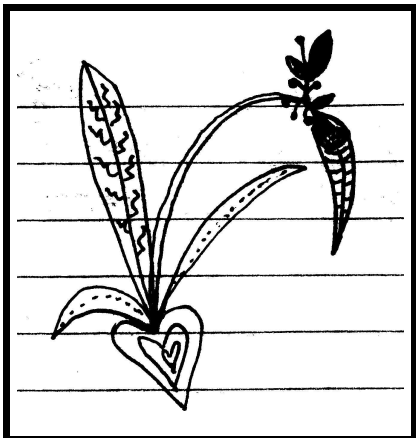
A takeaway wish on a takeaway star

Either way, let it be quick and let it be gentle.
And let there be someone to touch
and someone to listen.

In every timezone birthing, unbirthing.
At every moment prayer, for
you, etching silent thought or wailing,
or speaking quietly or strongly or chanting,
or being written or being read
on emails, blogs and forums, calling
to Jesus or Allah or us or quantum physics
or old photographs
or makeshift beds
or tired eyes
or art.

Now this exists.

If the Internet is a poet the poem is written in a layer above us
If the Earth is a poet the poem is written in a layer below and
around us
If the sea is a poet and the sky is a poet and you are a poet and I
am a poet
take one for medicine and two for magic and three for hope
and all the rest for love



In whatever voice

poems

Janet Jackson

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More poems online: www.Proximity.webhop.net

In whatever voice

The answer to that question can only be sung.
Can only be whoooed in an umbrella-flipping wind
Can only be rained.

It can't be Googled, archived,
written or spoken.

But it can be born. The answer to that question can be born
in a plane or a tunnel,
a revolving restaurant or a cavern,
a Hyatt or a hostel.

Then it will need to be rained.

The answer to that question might be rained
by a guitar, might be tossed all over you
by the interplay of drums, might be splashed
hot onto your cheeks by the smile and flip,
pull and release of bass.

Or by nine quiet words and the slight tilt
of a face.

Then the answer to that question may be felt
but you have to feel it yourself. You have to sit

in the perfunctory hush of a non-denominational chapel
and cry into empty hands. Rain that rain, bent double.

Pray for the first time,
to presence which knows no name.

To presence which needs no name,
give thanks for the loss of a dream.

Stare into stained glass and find, sun-backlit,
the face.

Then sing and sing, in whatever voice you have.
The answer to that question can only be sung.

Go

(Dublin 2005)

Beggar on the bridge huddled
in a blanket, grey
blanket, stone faces reflected
in the river, black
river, blood in my neon
eyes, red
as the taillights,
neon as the red lights,
neon as the dawn breaking
on another never-enough
river, on black swans

White swan reflected.
This is where I
am, in the grey city, this
is where I am, with the beggar
on the bridge, this
is where I
am, huddled
in her blanket,
needing

Stone faces low
over the low water
Cars, crowds,
faces, feet,
her

I give her an alien coin and

go



Dream 7

I dream an Irish road and wake
I dream seven singers and wake
I dream night falling and wake
with my heart in my fingers
I dream hitch-hiking and catching a train
back to the city and wake
with a wish in my hands —

arch way of trees
a rain-green air
seven singers
faeries
stones —

seven singers mend a road
seven workers placing stones
four faeries and fourteen faery children
and 40 faery souls and 40,000 old spirits —

wrap my dream in green rain arms
touch my skin with soft child skin
touch my 40 skin with tender 7 skin —

while you still want to
while your age is a lucky number
and mine's a luckier one

Dream 22

Listen.
The air thin with one picked faun.
His brother in the flower,
pleading.
The air thin.

His sister on the stone,
weeping. The tide in.
The wind rising.

Remember, sister.
In the sanctuary.
Roof of sunleaves, walls
of stone, ivy on walls
of stone. Trees. Humus
on steps of stone. Bright
graffiti.
Flower bravely, let your petals fall on it.

Listen.
The air thin with one picked faun.
On the steps in the leaflight
listen and weep.

In the sunshrine, branch-sanctuary,
leafchapel, weep
for the brother.
Let your tears fall on it.

Among the graffiti carve in the stone
a symbol
for the sister.

Evidence

Only in dream do the children come out first,
lined up, nervous

Only in dream do my enemies look on,
tittering, nudging in new school uniforms

Only in dream my book's blank leaves grow scribbles
crowding out his name.
I draw a box to protect it,
to carry it.

Only in dream is he
taller. Only in dream
are my body's arms around him.

Soft against my cheek, his
tender neckskin, his
fuzzy handknit sweater,
smelling sweet and old

Only in dream is he
silent while I have words.
Does he hear my dreamvoice against his neck?
I can barely speak
My throat is breaking
"I love you"

In my hand,
a leaf to bring back to you!
But surfacing vanishes my scrap of evidence

Then will it rain?

Wanting to talk with you
I went to your official residence
and many people met me
(staff, relatives, followers, tourists).
All of them spoke of you
but none could introduce us
because you weren't there. They said
you're not there very often.

Well... maybe you're out walking somewhere
and if I walk enough I'll meet you
on the road. Maybe if you walk
and I walk
until we're both tired and thirsty
we'll meet each other
at the well. the water-fountain. the bar.
The river.

Then will it rain? And will we stroll together
with our tongues out,
catching the cool droplets and laughing?

black strings

his perfect speech
stripped to the waist
his exquisite phrases
jeans tight and damp
his grammar
curls cling to his chest in a lick of new sweat
his diction
hair hangs black strings into his eyes
his pronunciation
steam fizzing off him
resonant vowels, sibilant consonants
touch me, touch me, touch me

Keypal

She heat, I light
she flower, I leaf
she burning fusion sun, I yearning captive moon
she reef of bright fish, I rock of one white bird
Together: all of it

One day a month we get
together, in our careful hair
she with henna, I with bleach
she in makeup, I bareface
she in her plush flesh, I in my skin and bones
In our jeans,
in our black jackets,
in our voices,
in our noise and our listening
Out of our webs, into one another's eyes

One hug hello or cheek-kiss: smooth remembered skin
and our voices
Maybe a shoulder-touch or laugh-nudge
and our voices
Usually a hug goodbye
then out of our voices, into our webs.

One database entry
One search, one match
One email
One reply, then many more
One safe public rendezvous

Boundaries crossed
sets intersected
patterns matched
lit up and bleeped like we'd won something

She made of brittle twigs and I of spun steel
yet she surroundsound widescreen, I patch of earth
She fragile and polished, I tough and ragged
Together: a shelter

Please wait to be seated.

You will be shown to good seats
but you will have to surrender.

Stand there and wait.

You may be given a public place,
in the centre of the faces and voices,
or a private booth:
a watching space, a listening hush.
You will be ushered by good-looking attendants
but you will have to surrender.

Observe the rituals.
Listen carefully, ask
clearly and quietly,
behave with respect.

And let a hungrier person go before you
and let a weaker person hold onto you.
Then wait in silence.
You will be shown.

four stones

*too care — never enough
blare, flare — weep
too sung to wear
cold drum — never
too stare — scare
too many eyes too deep*

*one never-enough river is ever
enough sketches, enough skin and bones, enough
stones. four stones are enough*

*because one is (love [a]live) listen
one two is (wet) walk
one two three is (drown[ing]) dance
and one two three four is (eternal) everybody sing*

are enough

The sound

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is an apricot's juice on my tongue,
my chin, my wrist, my t-shirt

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is rain and the warm wet of summer Sydney rain
and the smell of rain on a hot road

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is light filtering through leaves
is a jacaranda tree, purple licked onto green,
is sunset over a polluted city,
is sparks and spangles,
is shafts of old wooden darkness
tarred by time

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is heroin or whiskey or cut wrists,
is a searing coal and cold running water,
is my blood feeding the earth,
is plain sweat.

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is a touch, a glance, a smile,
is eyes meeting,
is the moment before a hug
and the moment after.

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is old and embarrassing
and cute and new.
Is too hot to touch
and unspeakably cool.

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is the roar of roadtrains,
is the moan of a mother and the answering wail
of her child,
is the thunder thump and hush
and whisper
and rumble and race of a race.
Is gulls over grey water.

The sound of MY FAVOURITE BAND
is all of it,
all of you,
all of it.
All. (For U2)

When the train came, I cried

I walk with the ghosts who walk on the beach.

I photograph the rails,
the security cameras, the grey sea,
the mansions on the hillside.

I touch the stone walls,
sit on the steps, breathe the air,
read the graffiti.

I climb the hill and look at the view.

I stand at the gates,
peer at the carvings, record the leaves
and branches, the signs.

Half the world from here and just under
my skin
Thousands of miles in a breath, in a word
Thousands of steps in a sigh, in a song

I buy a ticket and wait for a train.

There are names for everything but you
have no name
for this.

*New magpie,
try your wings. Break
your voice.*

*Trees turning gold.
Halfway along the road,
a rich man looks back.*

*Clothes tossed aside. Skin
burning.*

*Water broken to pieces.
Put away your equipment.
Pull up your quilt and dream.*

paint it

cross the abyss, make it
nothing

take my heart and paint it
take my namelessness
my namelessness and carve
your mark in it

give this rough wood your,
spread on it the damask perfection of your
careful words
show this mockup an example of your expensive feathers
give this metal-thief your,
all your
rags,
your rags to shiver in

give this iceheart your rags to shiver in
give this silent horn a hollow place to cower in
give this emergent mess a useless mask to pose in

give this lockstockpile a lovesong to live in
give this onceteen a fantasy to drift in
give this dreamer a medium to dream in

paint it

cross the abyss, make it
nothing

Echo and ache secret

Let me tell you in
A flat minor
that my feet are a snare and a tomtom Skin:
a splash cymbal Heart:
a hihat
a ching ching ching ching ching ching ching ching Gutcoil:
bass guitar and kickdrum Inter
locking Inter
woven In

So let my hair be slow electric,
my eyes be rests and cries,
the line of my lips be the echo and ache secret,
full of every
thing [un]
mappable
and kissing the mike with words without warning

She is moon

He is uber-explosion: his faces
on bus-stops, bodies on screens,
mind on view.

She is a photograph taken with him
at the Oscars. She is moon,
murmur, faint amid all his so-bright
sunlight, solar
wind. She is muse,
murmur, focus, fathom,
theme. She is the moon
of the glow in his dream.

There are marks on her face,
her Sea of Tranquillity face.
Her art?

Un/speak/able

With what's left of my face after you
have finished with it, your sun
melted it, your shocks and switches
scoured and scarified it, your challenges
chopped and chiselled it, your licks and lays
licked and lavaged it,
ravaged it with your un
speak
able ways

With whatever skin I still have,
whatever still works in my eyes,
whatever screams I have left,
with hands turning to stone,
with all my remaining teeth,
with spider veins in my cheeks
and enough flesh for one kiss
in the thin ghosts of my lips
I will finally speak your name.

Throw off all fakery and surgery,
present your name in the city,
howl it in what's left of the country,
throw it all over the Net.
With every note left in my mouth.

When you can see all of me,
when you can hear all of me,
when all the red things, sad things,
good and bad things inside me
no longer divide me from you
I will finally, at last, in ecstasy speak
your name, your name, your name, your un
speak
able name.

If the rain

If the rain works away our concrete
and steel, to reach and feel
original stone and earth

If it wears away the metal
rings and brick boxes around street trees
so greenfleshed lives can sway, scented,
in their shelter

If it knocks out the electric
lines and stops
our train, traps
it for vines and mudwalls

If it slops the style
out of our hair and the makeup
off our faces, hoses off
our lowrise jeans and highrise boots,
our ghoulgear and bling,
our multitoned helplessness and hope

If it grows on our backs
fur and homespun and moss

Charisma

Not the hem of his garment.
Not the fleeting brush of fabric,
peripheral, unnoticed...
Not the hem of his garment.
His wrist.
His solid, haired, warm right wrist
and this, my hand,
my [in]elegant white left hand,
holding.
Seconds, skin to skin,
eyes closed only to feel.

— So. You'll never wash it again!

Yes I will. I didn't take anything...

— No photograph? No autograph?

I didn't need to.
Not a piece of him.
Not taking —
giving. Giving
energy/information/spirit, call it...
call it love. Yes, that.
Focused on the interface
of skins. Unafraid.

And if I received anything —
a blossom of spirit,
not a blessing of sweat.
So yes, I'll wash.

Anyway, he doesn't wash off.

The Director

He invites me to the special, firstclass dining room
Wear your Bombay hat, he says, so I find it
and in a girly white hat and a long flowered not-me dress
I cross a room crowded with ordinary tables of ordinary people
They all know me
Some of them maybe even care about me
and all are curious. Where y'going?
I'm having dinner with the Director, I flounce.

I get to the door, he,
pressed white shirt, charcoal jacket,
cleansmooth face, short cleansmooth dark hair,
looks me in the eye, smiles, says,
in his semiliquid voice,
Let's go somewhere more intimate, I know a place

In this dream I can speak a little.
Yes, let's, I say.

His car is not a greenblack Mercedes
It's more my type of thing, a beatup red Holden Astra
He sees my look and says
It has sentimental value
It runs with an assertive dreamsmooth humroar
He knows how to keep a car running
I like that in a man

*They grew him and he left
They left him — he returned
He sings and his words fall from their mouths
When he sleeps their dreams disturb his peace*

*He sings and sings
Is he not a bird?
His dreamwords fall, my wings return*

To: webmaster@TempleFinder.com
Subject: an update for the Pilgrims Guide

When finally we reached the temple we found it collapsing, one brick at a time. Some walls have peeling paint; others have layers and layers of graffiti from years of pilgrims — some disappointed, some angry, some sad, and some clinging to their obsession and leaving flowers, photographs, little handmade cards and books, and more than a few pieces of clothing. Leaving their offerings (and teddy bears. did I mention the number of teddy bears? and the money and bottles of whiskey, which a smiling attendant collects after the pilgrims have finished their tearful or ranting obeisances or their hair-and-clothes-tearing or their hysterical shrieking). Leaving their offerings and maybe their delusions on a concrete platform, its chipped paint as grey as the sky.

We entered the temple and found it stinking. Stale cigarettes, old pizza, last night's whiskey. The priests were out drinking in a bar down the road, except one who lolled in a back room, half-dead from heroin. When the others returned from their "meeting", they injected him with something to reanimate him so they could continue their parody of the sacred rites.

We had journeyed to the temple, a group of us, full of love or longing or fear or exultation, and a few who came along for the photo-opportunity, full of derision. But when we saw the mess and the useless priests and the grinning, well-fed attendants, even those full of derision became sad, and those full of exultation collapsed on the filthy floor or ran into the littered niches, crying their thunderstorm tears and howling their blue-black howls.

But it was only when we heard the muzak that we began to mutilate ourselves.

Dress in rags

I love it when you dress in rags.
The ragged edges show how whole the centre is.

When you dance in your old clothes
simpler than today's clothes
your powerful body shows me the child inside.

We are just children wearing layers.

Dress in rags. Show me a bit
of your skin, and if your hair gets thin
don't fake it. Take it
all the way ascetic,
desert dirt aesthetic,
in rags, in patches, in mixed
colours, in glory,
exulted,
enlightened,
unlimited

making it up as you go along
in your rags.

Nameless

One stunning orb.
Best I've ever seen.

Not symmetrical, not
centred, not perfect:
no giant hand made it,
no tiny mind designed it.

Shimmering elliptical target.
Soundless nameless strands.

Hidden spider not proud,
just spider. Resting,
worknight over, wanting
not praise, but flies.