Touching Stories of You

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touching stories of you

one

Reading:

Windows are open,
and the breeze assimilates,
soft, then softer,
the sound of gentle
breathing across the window screen.

The dogs are barking.
Loud and important where they are,
but those lowly vibrations filter through trees to where we are,
here,
on the couch in your upstairs apartment.

The books are open,
and the back of your head is on my lap, your legs
extend to the other end of the couch; I hold the pages
with my right hand fingers, and my forearm slips in the lower ridge
along your clavicle, smoothed by a white t-shirt and absent bra.

The dogs are barking,
but not loud enough.
I hear you breathing, and the occasional cardinal
whistles high vibrant pitches, but not loud enough,
to wake you.

Your lips are open,
and press softly against the cotton covering my ribs; my left hand, immersed in
your fawn hair, stroking the hair on your neck
with the tips of my fingertips,
soft, and then softer.
two

Riding:

The sun, a throw of nuclear fire
in the imaginary middle of a shifty, shaping universe,
spins along the coast around the imaginary middle of the Milky Way,
taking 200 million years to travel a complete nomadic circle;
a year is the time it takes
the earth to circle the sun.

The sun
is bigger than the word “sun,” is bigger than Ashley, a golden retriever,
is bigger than Italy, is bigger still than the volume of the Atlantic,
that huge hunk of water, is bigger than Atlas and is bigger
than the earth by one million degrees,
looks the size of a speck from Pluto, is
inconceivably smaller than
the galaxy.

The sun
shines sharply on the Pacific ocean,
heats the bouncing waves at the top of that swirling bucket
of liquid lake after liquid lake after river after raindrop,
and meanwhile shines past the earth against the rock of moon,
our eighth hovering continent, reflecting the white and invisible light waves
through the floating clouds straight to and through the window to
your carpet.

You and I, we dance in the dark in the moonlight
to the music of Bob Dylan pushing his fingertips into the strings
on the neck of his guitar, quiet chords of E and A, as he sings Shelter
from the Storm with the breath of his impassioned soul, the breath
of the fluid atmosphere sucked into shallow lungs
and pushed through harmonizing vocal folds,
reproduced with electricity, magnets, and a laser, from that shiny CD.

I breathe you, sunshine, my anesthetic, my inamorata, pulling you in
with the knuckles of my elbows, my moist lips open on your neck,
twirling the deep fiber of your hair, the loose cords of Amaryllis.

three

Passing:

When you hand me the phone, and say
it’s my mother, for one second
in the exchange, our fingers lightly
graze.

my fingers have squeezed the muscles above your kneecaps;
my thumbs have pushed into the pressure below the back of your neck;
my forefinger has smeared salt from nose to ear;
my hand, in a mitten, has locked with your glove on a ski lift;
my palms have cupped your ribs in waterfall mist;
my fingerprints have swept beneath your elastic belt line;
my hands have kneaded your feet in crowded restaurants;
the eight V’s have caught the current of your long waves of hair;

the heel of my hand has started under your middle toe, weakened your spongy
instep, rounded your calloused heel to your soft Achilles’ tendon, pressed firmly up
the underside of your leg, roughly over the hot muscles in your joint, stretching the
skin towards the backside of your body, crossing over your thigh near your hair,
wiping emphatically up your stomach like an iron, around the outside of your
breast, over your hard shoulder, then flipped lightly onto your neck, transferred
pressure to the fingertips, floated around the tender back of your bending ear, shuffled
the hair out onto your temple, tracing softly under your cheekbone, sensed the warm breath from your nose, and touched your parted lips a passage before I kissed you.

And this brief remembrance at our touch, this hope for the future is loud enough to send an army charge of caterpillars happy with a thousand suctioning toes to sing to sing in harmony up through the skin on my back under my shirt.

four

Parting:

    swim
    we open our mouths to sing each other
    some invisible wave of sunlight
    visionless we hear the buzz from the refrigerator
    feel on our jawbones the swamping pressure
    the comfortable suffocation under our stifled rubbing
    noses
    wet lips
    pull hot wetness from inside our mouths out to the bottom
    the top of our outer lips chewing surrounding
we breathe
swallow and taste
our tongues rub firm soft on inner
cheeks beneath teeth lick taste buds
suck and taste the lips and dying
skin

we reach out with our only jointless
muscle into another body

five

Sailing:

Your back to me, my hands on the flesh that is you.
Your arms up and bent back, touching briefly the hair that is me.
I move my tongue down your back like a drip of water,
rolling to the floor.

Meanwhile, the waves near the center of the ocean,
the ocean that wraps our planet,
believe they are the center of something
endless.

No matter, the waves have no entity. If you look
close, you don’t see waves, but the response of water
to waves – all those swimming H₂O’s. But the web is still there...
the web of the waves and amplitude… It’s all too much to think about.

We’ll go sailing, me and you,
on a raft tied up for two;
our stakes strung together,
suspended on this infinite plane.

We'll float on the surface of the huge, huge body of fluid atoms rolling and shifting beneath us, float on troughs and crests of the thin visual border between ocean and sky.

Up through the clouds will be the stars and the space and the endless. Down through the ocean will be the bottom of the ocean, the earth, the sky, then endless and beyond.

But you and I are sailing. Not sinking. We're not drowning in the water or drowning in the sky. The infinite reach of space has swallowed us, but we are on the waves.

We are sailing on the waves.