

# ***Firestick***

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## A SEASON

This country is a burning fire  
all the trees and the day

Our way runs through colors we  
can only point and smile

at what falls down and strikes us  
flows over us leaves in air

in us love turns from each other  
and goes back to its source

and seasons flow backwards  
in winds from some southern coast

but it is here bread uneaten  
left by some necessity by the road

Another seeding inside you  
the will drives to another center

where we close and turn into  
darkness and turn

where something grows strangely we  
think of it as a garden in sun

where the light is all gold  
on green and flowers are strobes

and yes we can not go back there  
and roll grassily children

something bluntly charges  
into darkness and leaves its shape

Surely today in her coins  
the gypsy has a new knowledge

We can't find a name for our sorrow You turn and go  
away and I watch

watch fall crows rise hundreds spread  
and merge in into the dark.

## ACT OF LOVE

like Chandidasa a  
touchstone, threaded you  
wear upon your throat

in the act of love  
The tinkling bells which decorate her hips sound the triumphal  
music of the god of love our deliberate union  
all we know in the act the moon and sun in the  
outstretched arch your mouth an offering of moan

in the waterfall pool two  
trout hold still their heads  
in crystal waves of  
unbound hair

## **APOCRYPHA**

Bait made of tin let's say to  
bring us wolves  
is what we've got

and after years turn  
our dull eyes slack  
to left right

knowing we wait in  
the wrong  
wilderness

They are sending a steel  
fox with a bellows

we learn fierceness from  
fire

## **BROKEN SURFACES**

The rain begins in bits no  
bigger than stars at night.

It would take a million to  
make a mouth full.

We walk around the lake  
another edge between  
us we try to speak  
around it

In the heavy air minnows  
skitter half-in half-out.  
Every word  
falls into one

memory. On the rocking pier  
we stammer simplest things

fall mute frogs silent  
wait out the storm  
one hand on the pillar

## FIRST SONG FOR THE BEAUTY WAY BLESSING

--Spring Equinox

*Asking Permission at FrogFarm*

Green words ho! washed clear the mind to the  
sun put the firebird on my throat and tied hair back  
with raw yarn in the stone where the Diegueno  
pounded acorns we grind corn

On the great rock corn for your power in  
the beauty of granite  
the way you hold together

North to the mountain with springs  
corn for your living water for quartz and  
garnet that slowly grow in beauty. Here  
I said beauty now I say it.

South to the green valley  
corn for your way the beauty of  
oak trees all the living things  
in the wisdom of the south way.

West to the place between the great knees  
of stone mountains where the sun goes received  
to the ocean corn for that beauty way she lets  
you go now north for spring to come.

East to the sun where you are now  
corn for your rising-up strength beauty of  
the day that comes with all animals and  
plants who look east now for their  
strength here I said beauty now I say it.

And walk to the garden and say teach me  
how it goes green leaves shaped like seeds  
find your beauty way now corn at four  
corners and the open gate.  
Path with flowers yellow and blue corn  
for your beauty way  
a thousand perfections for attention



Corn to birdsong and animals moving but  
not seen in the chaparral moss and rapid  
insects trees that lie down and show how  
they were made here I said beauty now I  
say it.

Corn for the pool where the water falls from  
rocks clear as beauty with roots down  
where they come to drink.

House for going in at night corn for the  
big trees that protect this house oak  
trees growing in the beauty way. Corn  
for each corner and door to door  
friends to come in the beauty way.

here

I said beauty now I say it house full of  
beauty children who were here what we  
come to know in this place love to be. And  
come for the fireplace in the center for the  
food cooked for the things the fire shows us  
in the beauty way.

Firebird on my throat speaks green words  
mind of spring come washed clear in the  
beauty way.

## **FOR THE MOCKINGBIRD BIRD TO SAY**

now night grows into  
the past midnight  
mockingbird  
singing

in the sleek musk heat  
we move apart all  
our parts  
glazed like sugar

You sleep while i  
am waiting for the  
cold to grow

the open window  
lets in night noises

the yellow blanket  
is dark

somewhere  
in the Sangre de Cristo mountains a  
woman flattens her hand  
over the sheepskin over them in  
that fast thin air

We are gifted together

knowing that neither  
of us said the words  
of love

## **FURNISHING THE HOUSE**

where water wedged wood  
against the flooded trees I  
burrow and scatter:

a piece to serve as  
chaise lounge one for  
a kitchen block

one that will shed its years  
in thin dry layers a hard  
slab to carve this  
warning:

Thousands of frogs on the move,  
at night, all leaping west into a  
dark high wind. . .

## GENERATIONS

My sons begin to wander through  
my dreams and the poems eating  
licorice and prying curiously at  
things.

My daughter stands a little back  
an early candidate for wound and  
wisdom one arm behind her waist  
bribing the world with her grin that  
closes her eyes and holds it in.

The younger son wakes up choking  
from his mouth I rake out a slice of  
heart-meat rosy on the edges a  
cabalistic meal he swears he didn't  
take.

The first son in front of me on the  
little horse and when my father gets  
on as well we make it back to the  
spring, I don't see now — even its  
liver burst when it collapsed  
crushing John.

I carry him to the place and  
set the fireworks off early so  
he can see O he who carried  
the eagle-daemon that lived in  
a horse.

And my girl! sitting in a small  
road of shade in the high desert  
intently stroking the dewlap of a  
horned toad.

## IF THE DREAMER

### 1. Place of Emergence

Once we were in it  
(now we are not they  
say

Like the Shaliko naked  
first to themselves  
as gods masked  
to the diurnal turning  
wavering to the dawn ten  
feet tall men

coming out of winter  
born of night split  
open by drums by  
silence by a throb  
of earth

that turns out creatures  
men/seasons/all rising  
across the river

coming to us who stamp  
our feet with cold (then  
forget that in this dream  
IF THE DREAMER

### 2 . The Dream

If the dreamer were a seer he would  
know beginnings how to give  
thanks speak of death songs  
would go straight to gods This voice is  
next door  
a tall woman who is drunk

could tell which airplane will crash

I love fly- ing  
and am afraid but  
with  
how deep I dare to go to invent  
(invenire) equals to find: Jung  
jungle “the word itself hints what  
you are going to find,” equals  
complicated destruction

The language strips away defenses  
There is death  
destruction goes on I cannot  
help you: cannot help myself

The voice does not come again (bright  
in the dark) gone  
to make love dark sleep

### 3. Act

Smoking myself: fan  
the smoke  
into the loins  
armpits stomach  
Power of spirit  
of the tree burning

Come Grandfather come  
to me light the breath  
of the mother cure me  
of being only human

waftbeat of feathers  
rising to sun  
flaffrattle  
flaffrattle a  
prayer of smoke

We do this even who have  
not earned feathers motion  
smoke to us

with our dreaming  
hands

O sing again Water Maiden:  
your *mana* voice is ten is  
one thousand-and-one  
from the beams above us

## IN HERE

what the world comes to  
fabricate

to make the match bum  
on a single stroke

ah stroke the fish  
on a line

stroke love  
stroke bone

what mystery matters, THAT  
is what we want to know:

the length of the line  
does not say  
my father is 70 years old/ it

comes to this

he could make  
a child/ wedge a stone/ make  
my brother cry

fire  
dark rivers  
come into me



## THE LUSTY FLOWER

She curls en the mountain surrounded  
by wild buckwheat  
turned October rustred

her thoughts  
are the thoughts of animals

unknown shapes and size  
move under manzanita on  
loose oak leaves

She makes agreements with  
the season's last bee  
butterflies gene mad  
on a final blaze of yellow

Those pale little flowers of  
March and April exploded  
purple follows these hard  
red berries golden yarrow  
thick syrup  
high up

She minded light at sunrise on  
clouds that moved  
a bright lake in the valley

it lifts in the heat in  
silence a blanket  
closes on us the sun  
goes grey

She voices goldtipped words  
"I was waiting for you" to  
mouth fall air's white liquid  
velvet moss sweet green the  
thinned sun "the continual  
song that runs through walls"

A story they tell in  
lonely places  
who's in the  
house together  
when the first fog rolls in must  
spend the winter

## MAKING LOVE WITH THE WIND

A turtle dove warbles  
and waits

hearing something I can't  
dives off to another tree

something moves something  
stays. My lady do you hear  
the steady honey sound of  
insects in the sun

the sky opens its arms  
says "look at me!" and you  
do lying back lazy bare in  
the sun days and days  
can go by

This day after staring at  
your brown body all the early  
afternoon the storm gathers  
blue muscles comes over you  
darkly shouts A-HEY! A-HEY!

the first wind moves the  
top of trees  
gentle

water in the lake  
beside us  
is happy to rise

we go something stays  
this is not the last time  
but closer to that than  
the first.

## MANZANITA CIRCLE

Under branches old-apple brown we  
tunneled in on knees on animal trails fell  
springcubs on wrestling ground drank  
wine, ate jerked beef, bread  
(sun warm on us here)

Your motions mock the grace: distant trees  
undulate mountains  
When you move out of your clothes you  
become the object and eye of hills  
those  
    these lifetimes of  
    preparation:

Nothing is forgotten in the grand order

I tremble to find you again across  
all that time they would have been  
waiting for us  
    (had always been your  
lover even when I didn't know it)  
We lie in the center of all those  
lives

Heat and cool your body and shade— manzanita  
blossoms falling down on you

Holding our hands out together to the sun:  
    Talk with that fire, the stars beyond it  
    Talk with the wind  
like other small animals who have sunned here

## MINOTAUR

I look for a room in  
this house  
in the center of the forest

All the rooms are open each  
time she goes into one all the  
dogs stop barking On the clean  
sheets of the beds  
scattered letters of instruction

In the center garden with  
olive trees and roses a  
single horse looks at us  
his long head cocked

Sheep and dogs bleat at the  
old woman there working  
silently the beehives Her  
drunkard husband is never  
at home

For years he has ridden  
blindly the forest trails his  
rifle tied on his back  
with a cord of yellowed yarn

Rain on the fields  
fire in the oven after  
the rain mist  
rising through white daisies

the way it falls back  
into white folds  
delights me beyond reason

I want a room in this  
house in the center of  
the forest

I take my blankets up  
into the hunting tower  
lay my sights down on a  
minotaur  
with one twisted horn

## **TOKENED DAYS**

folly ah folly when we hope. For more  
than blurred gray behind eyes to count  
for tokened days.

where have the places got to where  
fade the spent short days?

Folly, where do gashed cashier's strips  
receipts for days I spent weave  
papered webs?

what wilderness have I paid for bartering  
what lion's-tooth trophies I had

## **OFFERING**

Snake come to offer your power I apologize  
you were strong and beautiful

That was an old stone from  
beside your granite lair that  
hit you

Was it true I lost my inner sister  
in the night ceremony among  
many moving people

So I have your place now But  
the others of fine senses  
and your mate out there  
don't know why you did it

I put on my snake dancer amulet and  
protection hear them  
slide in the darkness further back

I clear everything not necessary off  
the table and wash you yellowish  
brown white-tipped scales in single

triangles six apart At the tail five  
black  
four white bands seven rattles

You are long as myself from the neck big  
as a bicep with no bulge  
of food triangularly flat-bottomed

I'm sorry for your broken-off fang  
o winter-fasted fish o strong and  
beautiful sensor come from  
thousands of years with armor I  
sharpen my knife for this work  
full of care



## PASSAGE IN SHADES OF WHITE

Ash falls off incense  
how it is fragile odorous  
subject to  
gravity

Ten days ago these  
six white roses  
opened to a full moon

I keep them brown  
and splayed

Where are the wisdoms I  
grew a vessel holds its  
walls

We get a chance  
someone might fill  
our unfillable  
amphora and we start  
to love

A grey dog howls  
third time tonight and  
the moon I know  
rises later

Mysterious closing the great  
white owl's wings fold to its  
body

## A PLACE ON THE WAY

I am stopped by a small light  
    through a space between stones  
chanting in the early night The old  
    woman beckons me in  
    to come closer

The priest stands tall in his robes his young  
    face grows a white beard he  
chants his own response he  
returns through curtains swings  
incense vigorous on a chain crying out  
    over fire in a holder of round bread  
unknown words in smoke

    The old women in black  
    gather silently to  
the voice the circle of fire  
A burning in this place

He turns from preparing us

The dark woman puts out the priest's fire  
    offers the bread outside girls  
are drawing water  
    coils of old rope a deep well

In Olinthos ruined church I light a  
candle for you it is myself  
burning in silence after my words

## SECOND SONG FOR THE BEAUTY WAY

May you walk in beauty here  
This earth is seeded with tiny garnet  
Walk in beauty here

May you walk softly here Explosions  
go everywhere this ground is full of  
moss-green splays the rapid  
persistent chaparral quartz spreading  
starred fingers burdock unfolding out  
from its center  
tiny flowers explode in a day walk softly

May you walk in delight here this ground is  
home for many animals who live calm  
between fear and ecstasy catching and  
eating the rabbit suns himself on the rock in  
late afternoon calmly walk Name yourself  
quail skunk snake squirrel deer mice with long  
tail and big ears walk with animal delight here

In power here coyotes celebrate every sunset  
may your senses walk here voicings of bird  
and frog same as you and me and look with  
the crow's yellow eye who came today  
hawking and whistling to see about a man  
who promised to feed him on the mountaintop  
Walk in your full power here

In May you walk with attention for the beauty way  
This place lived many Dieguenes of dignity In the  
rocks here they ground acorns in nine circles that  
catch the sun They had joy and made love in this  
place with big trees and water black soil and many  
animals This place teaches Walk with attention  
here in the beauty way

## SONG COMING

the Road Man's place is empty.  
I begin to sing Hey-Way HEY-WAH HAH-  
WAH begin to catch the edge song with  
blue cedar smoke

Prayer for her empty falling her falling the  
place in the middle HO  
for his desire "a vision of spaces"  
somebody help such a foolish man HUUH

THE LIGHT TONGUES EAGLES IN AN AERIE  
SCREAMING A CIRCLE OF SOFT YELLOWS UP

I rock to east and west the smell  
of sage comes down to an empty  
center  
HAH-NAH HAH-NAH Hayah Hahayah

Green rills where the earth broke glaze  
the pinion resin incense balls that lie  
like marbles  
under the trees in the  
hills wind  
for every needle  
even the red flame in my mind  
whips to the side HEY-WAY HAH-WAH NEY-  
WAY NEY-WAY NAH-WAH

Stone steps spiral to the blindstory  
the tops of our painted vaults  
are rough heaps of rocks

THE MOVING SUN SHOOTHS THE UNDERSIDE of  
everything. Teaches us how to do it.

morning it shuttles livid through  
the orange weft HO  
carded through winter apple trees

NEY-WAH NEY-WAY I wait for my song  
morning ho

## SONG FOR A JOINING VISION

*"the grandfathers help pull me through the flame  
you can take it up all around you and have it to use"*  
--A Water Maiden's Vision

The sun rises: it is a mystery in ourselves  
light is born from sight sight is  
light  
The sun rises: it is a mystery in ourselves

We travel through a hole in the fire We  
are joined by those behind us, shapes  
we join we  
join  
we join our grandparents We  
line up with them behind us  
We are standing in their place now  
*We are standing in their place now*

We are with them, for that, thanks  
*We are with them, for that, thanks*

We have to do the work now  
for that, thanks for their help *We*  
*have to do the work now*  
*for that, thanks for their help*

They have given us sight of them,  
for that sight, thanks  
*They have given us sight of them,*  
*for that sight, thanks*

We are standing with them, that is a gift for us  
and for that, thanks  
*We are standing with them, that is a gift for us*  
*and for that, thanks*

Ho! the sun's rays come to us in rainbows, in  
all colors that we see here;  
The colors are falling from the sun,

It falls forever and it does not fall, a thousand years  
stopping with our heads raised.

We all of us one race living now  
We the same as our great-grandfathers

We join in the rainbow of sun rise  
We greet our grandparents in the halo

We make voice to remind us of mystery

## THE HEALING

The largest extant crow comes  
primaries stretched fingering  
the warm air  
kraa-ing kraa the sun

above him the smell of copper in  
his call. He comes again  
again not really watching me

burning old calices and rotten  
wood for spring.

When such a bird comes When  
such a bird speaks  
turns the air to turquoise

he hazes the sun out behind no  
visible clouds turning the black  
wheel of attention on his poised  
inside wing.

When such a bird comes  
When such a bird speaks

Crows themselves flame up  
spontaneous into dark torches to  
cauterize our burning eyes.



## THE SUNSET BECOMES A BURNING TEMPLE, PULSES LIGHT

--Leave-taking poem for Larry Shaefer

*"When the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the  
fire has gone out, and speech is hushed, what then  
is the light of man?" Upanishads*

Come ceremonial need-fire/wood ritual  
matter has grown cold my father's yearly  
festival with earth is lost

we would  
put our hands on old rhythms move  
toward another season

Put the firestick now to the forehead  
draw the smoke into the mind blow  
it to earth to wind to midnight  
water

In the night I tremble knees and elbows  
and forehead on the floor there is no  
single wisdom your stomach  
heaves as if it could empty you of pain

you suffer defeat/ she cries out from darkness  
we are totally defeated it belongs to no  
particular thing it all comes in we can die  
without purpose we answer love with  
selfishness I don't know how to help you  
"we are weak and poor we  
don't know anything"

Ourselves charged how else should you learn  
"fire-boring" rhythmic motions  
spiritual feeding from breasts the woman  
sobbing in the candled dark

We discover ritual it gives form  
to our suffering it remembers

what we are who would forget our  
humility  
    shapes to a waiting bowl

Then as it happens just before dawn she  
    brings into this house earth  
    you bring the bowl for fire

We speak of suffering  
we thus make fire with our mouths

## THE TRANSFORMATION

The form in which it appears necessarily  
clings to it.

To feel this a  
conversion to form  
    Way to make knowing possible.

    To take the name of ancestors to  
eat totem meals  
    Not enough.  
    The other being.

I am flying become distracted talking to my  
    brother  
    lose control we crash on  
    the mountain walk out  
    among the trees  
    together

I am riding a black horse up the water ditch I begin  
    talking to the horse and find him wise as we  
    go through golden tall grass he becomes a  
    tall young man At the edge of the field we  
    make love the raccoon and deer watching  
    and I discover she is a woman

## UNTITLED

This vision depended on its motto to  
give dignity to the animals-- there were  
to be three of them whose occupation  
until now had been to crack stinking  
bones from trash cans  
and skulk through moonless nights;

now one of them glowers in the shadows  
of old alley sheds eyes  
a wanting of stars  
gone to the black  
pooled behind everything

because of me guilty by reason of  
forgetting the first detail he is a laser  
of anger lacking a name to bring  
him out of the darkness.

On his muzzle hoarfrost of light this  
one who whispers in snarl,

while the other two crouch down and  
wait under the dream's dark blanket.

## WALKING: SPRING IS FOUR WAYS

1.

Walked down expecting a path  
leading to a stream but the hillside  
only fell on

It is simply some random  
place in the middle of a forest  
I have come to alone

Found a hardwood stick leaning  
against a tree  
its top already polished

II.

Here is bumblebee's  
investigation the beat of an  
invisible bird the whistle as its  
big wings  
batter through branches no that was a  
California spring a year has passed

not paying attention I walk  
barelegged into nettles

III.

Brown ants swarm in the old stumps leathery  
fungus eats from the sides

May strawberry blossoms so many  
I can't help but walk some down

IV.

i am tracking a dove throb in afternoon walk  
on old leafheaps and rootswells

i wait in a spot in the sun the  
dove comes closer and closer a  
tree at a time  
and at last drops a message i can't find

i move out of my clothes

i am here for the sun after all  
to meet a lover  
to find a place

## WHAT WANTS TO GROW

After a full moon came after predicted  
clear sun tomorrow a torch of  
lightning over Mesa Grande  
a night flood coming down-mountain

two ranges lit in shades by the furious moon  
by the struggling moon In rain rain I eat the  
smell of wet rocks and white sage  
water pouring off the cedar roof

glad for the inside fire back there made  
from a crotch of oak with three limbs  
that slowly split away in serious love

who reminds me how we love our teacher  
and forget how we learn and forget

The fire is down rats are fucking under the  
floorboards twittering and shrieking  
like birds Next will come a pounding at the door

Owl whoop and coyote scramble where are you  
in the rain tonight? My prostate pulses with  
crying-outs under a new moon owls seducing in  
two tones where are you?

And who rides beside me slowly the saddle  
rises, we lope on a trail through chaparral and  
come here seduced by a myth  
in the seventh month of fearing

But back with the full moon and the rain  
I sit rocking on my knees in pleasure at  
far thunder its get runs from the roof I  
piss on the streaming patio stones and  
let the rain take it away to the roots of  
whatever wants to grow here