

AWAKE AMID ANCESTRAL DREAMS

Poetry

EMMA MOONSINGER

Emma Moonsinger



ESTUARY PUBLICATIONS

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Mars Hill, NC USA
ISBN-10: 1456445499

Cover art by: E. Moonsinger

Emma Moonsinger

'Looking down upon us surely they weep throughout Eternity.'

Yet we live our lives in doubt beyond their tears .

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A DOORSTOP BOOK
ESTUARY PUBLICATIONS



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AWAKE AMID ANCESTRAL DREAMS

Lights above us
We can not see
What's under foot
We do not feel
As we tread about blindly
In ever decreasing circles

Awake amid ancestral dreams
We despoil their gifts
And carry away only trinkets
From over-abundant treasuries
With no concept that they
Us see
Or hope that we they
Will ever hear

Asleep among ancestral bones
We dream no dreams and leave only
Shallow marks upon the walls of Time

UNCOMFORTABLE WITHIN

Uncomfortable within ourselves
We're fearless in the wide wide world
Out 'n' about
Playful, joyful, thoughtless, free
Carelessly drunken

Well, not really
Or at least not always

But we could be
We could be
Playful, joyful...
We are (thoughtless)
We remain (free)
Carelessly drunken
Perhaps not always

We kill our time with duller things
Doting over the past

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Near mindlessly
Snared and caught up in photographs

Slouching through the months
For that's the shortest measure
Undistracted (Or so I suppose)
Things left behind
Left unexplored
Lost treasure

That world
Which we carry wounded within
Is what they make
Self-help books for
Wisdom cheaply bound

I once truly thought--
I think we all did--
That we might capture
This very moment
And live it fully

Fat chance! we cheer
(Yes, I hear the raucous laughter)

Uncomfortable within ourselves
We may be just a little too content (do you think?)
Inside the cage
In which we dwell
Without thought of escape
Or yearning for
What might be more elusive
Less easily attained
Of greater value
Purer

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DEPTH

I *wish* I knew what Depth was

I said laughingly

And she said

That she knew Depth by watching me

By watching me struggle

I asked

No, she said, by watching you at rest

Wow, I thought

Someone--

And not just anyone

But someone who knows me--

Thinks I have a moment's rest

A moment's rest, I thought

With longing

(Oh god, with such longing)

I wish I knew a moment's rest

I said

Mostly to myself

Searching her eyes

I could see that she was quite sincere though

And so, I had to love her

More deeply

For her innocence

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MY DOG

My dog--

Humble creature--

Out of the most thoughtful

And kind consideration

For the burden

That is my daily obligation

To him

Made a valiant attempt--

Not entirely in vain—to

Just for one day

Feed himself

While I remained too long away

It was a kind of gift, I suppose

Breakfast in bed, perhaps

But in reverse form

He showed concern

And took great care

Not to deplete
The wealthy, o'erflowing stores
Of kibble
Or defile in any way
Those great heaping bags
A thought
I thought
Quite nice

Instead
He thought, I think,
Apparently
From the evidence
Or greasy lack there of
A pound of butter
Would
For himself
That day
Suffice

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DECLARING I HAVE KNOWN

Declaring, "I have known..."

I dwell upon the declaration

Of Love I have known

Of tears I've shed,

Disgrace,

Shame,

Humiliation,

All earned, of course

Kept nicely hid

There's that smile!

These things I bring upon myself

I deserve no better

Unwilling or unwitting scoundrel

For lack of vision

These things I bring

Upon myself

The wounds I bear, simple as they may be
I bear willingly
But not proudly like some
Shamefully like
(and here I have a chance to be kind)
Most (I suppose)

In full, light of day, knowledge
That my tread upon this earth
Bears the mark of arrogance
Offers no rebuff which I can not bear
With flighty indifference

This chin held high
Puts a nice face on my belligerence
Pugnacious,
Defiant,
Challenging,
Vain,
The false face of Pride and
Hair bleached eternally blonde

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My claim to know anything
Would be laughable
To anyone who knows me
Or knows of me

That look planted so firmly in my unwavering eye
Declares
My own stupidity
To anyone that might care to see it
Which is, I think probably is,
(and here I have a chance to be cruel)
Anyone (I fear)

But that's just a guess

And with this burden
I trudge on
Seemingly un-wracked
And unrepentant
Quite pleased with myself
(But aching)

THE GREAT DIGNITY

A small bird

A small bird has come down

And nestled in my heart

I could feel her settle in

Her singing

Her singing delights me each morn of every day

Her cooing soothes me nightly into sleep

Does this bird

Does this bird belong to you my love?

It bears your mark upon its wings

These wings

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These wings flutter

At your approach

Your nearness

The thought of you

Your smile

Your smile lifts my heart

And I take flight

And I do not take readily

To the sky

Only place

Only place your hand in mine

And

The bird of my heart stirs within me

And (for the moment)

I fear her escape

But gladly

But gladly would I see her take wing
If knowing she would fly to you
And reside within your heart
Causing it to sing like mine

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LIKE A CHILD LOST

Like a child lost
I stand here stubbornly
As if the sweep of time
Might mean nothing to my jaded heart

It's my soul that cries
For the comfort of things
That I know are out there
And free for the taking
But which I refuse to take

This wound
Self-inflicted
I can bear
I can ignore
I can forget
I can not give in to
Its nagging aching persistence
I can bear

No, I take my stand here
On this spot
I refuse to budge
I will not follow

I will with these cold eyes
Survey the horizon of my past
With great indifference and
Fleeting expectation
Of falling at last upon
My own image there

I refuse to chart
The waters I have known
I have traveled across
I have swum in
From which I have taken
My salty, lively sustenance

Bestirred again to the sea's calling
I have no tales to tell

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That chart laid out before me
Could lead me yet to safer waters
Harbor,
Anchorage,
An eternity of gently rocking
Leeward rest
Buffeted, unbuffeted
(I know there is a word for that.)

Yet, child-like
I prefer the open sea

THIS IS ALL REGRET

But

Let me say only one thing more

In passing

A casual sort of observation

Stripped of nuance

Free of rhythm

Without implication

No agenda whatsoever

An amusement merely

An amusement

When I moved to Forestville

For the sake of Love (insert raucous laughter here)

I made myself a promise

On that first starry night

I promised myself that I would

Spend each night

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Upon that porch

Looking up at the starlit sky

It hung so closely overhead

It was unlike any sky I had seen

Since childhood

And I made a solemn vow

I thought that it could only do me good

I promised myself that I would

Each night, observe that sky

From upon that porch

It was deep and dark and somehow welcoming

That lovely sparkling expanse

And I swore that I would

From that day on (cross my jaded heart)

For as long as I lived in that neat place

Look up and upon that sky

For a moment I would dwell
Either giving thanks or
Barring that, open myself to
Accept its broadcast benevolence

The trees, you know, the trees
Seemed to know what I was up to
Flooded with a basic, off-hand, casual thanks, I prayed
That I would pray again
And would continue to pray
Under those knowing trees
Until eventually
I would come to understand such beauty
And add meaning to my prayers

The cats had no problem with it
They were out there every night naturally
Secure in the knowledge
Deprived to me
By too much effort
And far too much muddled thought

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And I went inside on that first night
With a solemn SOLEMN sacred SACRED searing vow
Branded fresh upon my lips
I swore

With an unfamiliar pride
Bravely swelling my stupid, childish heart
I swore

With tight closed eyes and clenched hands
I swore

And I lived in Forestville for –what?—
Three years (or more, I guess)
And never set foot out on that porch
At night
Again

MY THRONE

The kind of throne I would have
(For we need to plan these things)
Is anchored in the sky
Kept awash in ever-flowing tears

And
It will be a kindly thing

When I am crowned I would
Be seen surrendering to despair
Bowing humbly, unresponsive
To the surging adoration all about me

My unwavering humility (previously mentioned)
False front for a scheming heart
Will sway any doubter
Who gazes upon my sincerely wrinkled brow

I know this because

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Though I wish to be that light

That purity

That beacon

That shelter

That protector

That lover

That friend

I am, perhaps like others

Falling far too short

But pressing on blindly

In tortuous self-deception

Wishing only

To drag others along with me

In my hidden lust

(If I can)

I feign innocence or ignorance (depending on my mood)

Or sometimes laugh it off in

Ringing bell-like tones

Oh, come on, they always say
It can't be all that bad

But, I assure you, friend, it is
(Why this brings laughter, I'll never know)

In fact, it's worse
Worse because
The nature of that sword is that
You must run it through yourself
To get at others

And so I have

So, go away now
And let me work on this throne design

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WE KNOW HOW SHORT WE FALL

We know how short we fall
But never can admit it

That we know and do nothing is
A mystery to no one
Laughable to many
Regrettable to some
Infuriating to others
A fact we must divorce ourselves from
In order to continue
Along the silly jagged path

Laughable or sad
As someone once said
That's pretty much the truth of it

Ah well
As someone else once said
Ah, well

So it is that, one brisk day
Despite all odds and bad weather
We set sail
And with a good wind at our backs
Were driven nicely, swiftly, cleanly, neatly
Out to sea

Out there, there is no reason
No direction, no control
I feel that I should tell you that
If you didn't know

And instantly we were in the midst of the storm
(they call it a squall)
Which everyone predicted

Lost in the roil, tossed in the trough
Slammed up and down, from side to side
And driven onward
Abeam, astern, abow, again abeam
Mercilessly

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Too tiny to fend it off

Helpless

In the Hands of God

There was no time for fear

We had work to do

Beyond the clinging and the prayer

The driving rain, the shrieking winds

The threat that we would be capsized

Surrounding us, and pounding us

Would our fears be realized?

(Thank you Thoreau)

Out there, as quickly as things change

Fears and hopes are rearranged

(Thank you Dr. Seuss)

As suddenly we found ourselves

Not quite dead calm

For that would be tedium

But in the balmy wind

And that wind
Simply drags us gently
Home again

And, yes
That's how quickly it happens
And, yes
That's how quickly it can end

After being out at sea
The land's stability
Under foot
Was, well,
Unsettling

And so we stood there for a while arm-in-arm
Looking longingly out at that great granite mass
We stood there drenched and shivering
Having faced together something very real
With Fear's encouragement
Still in our quickened hearts

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FOR IT TO BE TRUE

For it to be true

It must be enigmatic

(And not mathematic)

That's what they say

That's what they tell us (though obliquely)

And for that to be true

It must be made clear

Undeniably ringingly

Within that part of us

Where we've chosen

To stage our own defense

Yet we continually write and dance and sing

Expecting others to hear

And maybe sympathize (or lead the way out of here)

But, OH, wait

The thought arose within me
Just now
That perhaps
It can only be explained
Through metaphor

Two meta-twos
Either multiplied or added
Or one meta-eight
(this line is yours)

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IT'S RIGHT TO MARVEL (once again)

It's right to marvel (one more time)
At the mechanism that is the human hand
The way it moves
All the things that it can accomplish

It's right to mull
To wonder, to regret
All you've lost or have left behind
In the blinking of a selfish eye

It's right to drag
Those big fat feet of yours in
An effort to slow things down
As if we ever could

It's right to enjoy the sound
Of your own mind
Cleverly churning
In silent surmise

Can you slow that 'cessant ticking
Hold up the Past before us?
And if you could
What would it 'complish?

Have we learned that lesson yet?
So many times before
We've proven negligent
While holding too tight to time

(Not to be cruel but)
What's that unraveling in your hand?
It dwindles even as we sit here

Ah, but maybe there'll be time enough later,
When old, and sick and dying
Maybe then we'll at last shoulder the task
With arthritic joints and surprising skill

On the other hand--
The reasonable one

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The truthful one--

I must urge you

I feel I must

I feel I should

While your teeth are still strong

To take a good deep bite

And render the fruit of it with pleasure

And crush it thoroughly

And savor

Every

Golden

Drop

As it trickles

Down your throat

On the other hand

For there always is one

Perhaps it's all just

A big mistake

And as was written on the liquor store wall

So what?

IT'S ONE THING

It's one thing to choose for yourself
A thundering depth of soul
Or steadily seek the pounding silence
Coddling the blinding empty vision
Of foolish Expectation
(But know your knots before you go)

It is quite another
To attempt that
While being driven forward
By this life's biting trivialities
The lock that will not hold
The felling of a tree
The car that will not start
The bus just missed
The distance on heavy foot to work
With nagging time nipping at your heels

But only try

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Attempt that

Pursue it

Maintain the hunt

Keep the scent of it in your nose

Throughout the ragged course

After you have it once touched

No matter how slight the touch

No matter how briefly

There can be only disappointment

And ravaged hope

That's what the Buddha says

His eternal message being

So, don't allow yourself to

Fool yourself again

Or, you'll be left

To stand and watch

While the prey dwindles into

An embarrassing somewhat wacky idea

Forgotten in your brief time here

And impossible to explain to others
Should you find one
Who cares to listen to your awkward tune

Did I mention Hope
That it MIGHT re-emerge
Tantalizingly, sparkling, teasing?
There ahead
Did I see movement?

Do you feel something pulling gently upon your ear?
Do you feel a nudge in your ribs?
Can you hear it through the traffic?
See it moving again
Yet fleetingly
In the meaty trudging sullen throng?

Around that corner it scampers
Down an alleyway it goes
I'm sure that was it
Though I only caught a glimpse

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Shall we?

That's the spirit

IF THEY KNEW ANYTHING

If they knew anything

It was that Life

Weighed out

Was tough

Perhaps for all of us

The rest they could

Hardly guess

Though guess they did

And had no qualms

About speculation

And few qualms about keeping an

Accurate accounting in which we now can find their lives

But they kept the good stuff to themselves

And took it with them to their graves

We don't know if anything has been lost or not.

Though we maintain a tendency to dig

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AGINCOURT

In Agincourt 1415,
I'm sure you remember this
The French
And the English
And a thousand yards of mud
Which lay in between

The French—
They outnumbered the invaders
Six to one (so, CLEARLY)
God was on their side.

The English take a stand
Do not advance
Refuse to move
It's six to one

Six to one
Six to one

God on their side
To the French it all seems pretty clear
Six to one

The French set out
Slogging their way through the muck and mire
Mucking their way through the slog
Six to one

Not quite midway (in the muddy field)
Breathless from the seemingly endless trudge
Their armor weighing heavily upon them
The good French clay entrapping them
And dragging them down
Their optimism waning
They foundered there
And (I'm guessing here)
Gazed yearningly (I mean helpless and aghast)
In the direction from which they'd come

While the English long-bowmen,

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Drew upon them...and
Released a hail of arrows (as someone said)
Like driven rain

And, well, quite naturally,
The good French soldiers panicked
In the very real pageantry of fear they fled
Frantic to survive, they turned
Only to collided
With their own rear guard advancing like nobility
Engorged with righteous indignation
Six to one

Entangled helpless heaps of French heroes
Struggled in confusion
In the deafening silence of fear and
Imminent death
While the English held back
Waited, drew again
Six to one

When the French had exhausted themselves
Unable to extract themselves
The English made their way
Out to their downed and dazed opponents,
And setting upon them with swords
Slaughtered them wholesale

Slaughtered them wholesale
Six to one

Six thousand French,
Of gentle birth
Were taken to be exchanged

Thirty-four thousand were
Dispatched without mercy
By the blade
With God clearly
On their side
On that day in 1415

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NAGGING DISCONTENT

My teacher once walked out on me
Muttering beneath his breath,
“Enough nagging...
Do as you wish;
It matters not to me.”

In pursuit I cast questions at his back
(wadded paper projectiles would have done)
‘Til he turned and sighing said,
“With gentle prodding I have prepared the path
March forward upon it or
Continue headstrong aimlessly
Wandering in the thicket.”

And I liked the sound of that
“Headstrong. Aimlessly”
“In the thicket”
And that is what I’ve done
I’ve chosen the thicket

And for fear that it might mark me
With a kind of discontent--
A snappishness, if you insist--
I found much happiness there

This happiness lies outside the great and
Noble ecstasy that might otherwise
Be my claim
But it seems quite natural still
(You know, for me)

I like a nice starched linen
I enjoy a wine with some depth
I make no apologies for discernment
In matters of that sort

MY CANARY

My canary can not be separated from his song
It is the thing that marks him
A creature of ineffable trust
Though in a tiny cage he dwells
His urge to fly unreasonably prevented
He awakes each morning with cheerful offering

He weighs nothing
He's really hardly there at all
But his presence is undeniable
Throughout the cheerful day

He makes it hard for me to be a grump
I must admit
He has the power to change my view
My hope
My odds
My chances
My somewhat clumsy thankfulness

He has a way of gently leading me to

Praise

Pleasure

The acceptance of things

Which I can not change

It's not only his bright feathers

It's more than his pure delight

The song is the message that is the wisdom

That is the song that is the bird

I'm jealous of course

I wish I had some of that

Swelling in me so strong

That I could not be separated from my song

I'm not even sure I know

What my song is

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HERE YOU GO

I was snuggled up nicely in a large chair reading
Just kind of nicely reading
Snuggled up
In a nice big warm chair, you know

It was a nice big thick book
And I had enjoyed the way it had started out
The way it began
The way things were headed
Just plodding along

Then HE appeared before me
And took (well snatched) the book violently
From my shaking hands
And he took a hank
I mean
He took a healthy thickness of pages
From the middle of that book
In his meaty grip

And I looked on helpless as he tore them out
He just ripped the entire center of that book out
And before my eyes he shredded it
Before my eyes it disappeared

Tossing the book back to me He snarled,
“There you go. Deal with it.”

So, well, I just thought I'd warn you

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WHAT DO I KNOW OF KINDNESS

What do I know of Kindness

What do we say we know

Perhaps it's not for us

To understand the word

What do I understand of kindness

What do I claim to understand

The kindness I extend

Is little more than show

So, why do I pretend

To know kindness

To offer what I've never known

To others

Why do I seek kindness

Expecting it from those

Who, like me,

Can not know what kindness really is

MOSQUITOES MAKE MORE SENSE

Sleep is one thing we naturally endeavor to obtain
And we have, I think, a kindly God
So, what value these
Little worthless, nagging fleeting things
Which, nipping continually at our heels
Drive us onward through the night?

What lesson are we to learn
From tossing and turning
Matters over
That will soon enough (but maybe not so quickly)
Resolve themselves
In the light of day

Problems soon to be gone
Which mean nothing really
And though I know
How little they mean
Keep me awake with their incessant

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Wild gesticulation

Yes yes yes-yes

Yes Yes Yes

YES...I know how little they mean

YES...I know what the real stuff is

So, I should take comfort

Or maybe I should be more...what (more stoic?)

Trusting?

Apologetic

Forgiving

Forgetful

Patient

Disappointed in myself

Ashamed?

What value these little worthless fleeting nagging things

The price tag on some

Tiny plastic scrap-end

Which like an itch demands my nails

Until it bleeds

In this world in which I've known
Comfort
Sights
And sounds
And endless delights of every conceivable sort
What purpose serves this nick nick nick nick nicking
Throughout the endless night

I know the need for rest in
Preparation for
The ever emerging tedious distractions
Which the light of day will bring
And I must face
Muffled in yawning and yearning for sleep

But this
This serves no purpose
In light of this
Mosquitoes make tremendous sense

As does the plague they carry

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NO LONGER UNDER GOD'S WATCHFUL EYE

No longer under the watchful eye of God
I wonder what I have done
To offend Benevolence
And drive it so successfully from my door

It's not as if I haven't been
Apologetic
It's not as if I don't regret my past
Or mourn my own stupidity

But I've banged my head a thousand times
Upon that overhanging beam
And I've stubbed my toe
My fair share of times as well

I'm not asking for any gifts
And I don't expect forgiveness
But I just hoped that maybe, you know
We could be friends again

TO RIDE THIS BUS (they say)

To ride this bus
You only have to get on board
That's what the song tells us
(But this bus never stops)

But this bus never stops
Never slows
Has no doors or windows
Is always crowded to the gills
(Packed fairly solidly)

Packed fairly solidly
With liars and scoundrels
And charlatans and thieves
Mirror admirers, clowns and at least one fool
(And this bus)

And this bus
Bears a sign that says

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It's on its rapid, easy swaying way

To Wisdom

(Wherever that may be)

Wherever that may be

They are clamoring to get on board

And be taken for that raucous ride

(Don't let this chance go by!)

Don't let this chance go by

Rocking on its bushings, jolting side to side

It bounces along the way

(You pay a hefty price)

You pay a hefty price

And there's something not quite right

About the smell of it

(The indifference of the driver)

The indifference of the driver

The smugness of the throng

The nagging thought that maybe
(Now that you're aboard)

Now that you're aboard
The nagging thought that maybe
The others have no nagging thoughts at all
(So, pardon me)

So, pardon me
And let me through
I think it's time
That I got off
(To ride this bus)

To ride this bus (so they say)
You only have to get on board

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THIS IS BUT THE WORKINGS OF MY MIND

This is not my work

This is not about my work

This is not me wielding the cudgel of my mind

This is the workings of my mind

(I am tempted to say merely)

It whirrs along unassisted

And so, what claim can I

Lay upon its frailty

Though I make ready claim

Upon any cleverness that may arise

(Dear ever-effervescent spring)

Which spills forth from my cunning lips

I bow

I simper (though I'm not entirely

Sure....uh...you know

What simper means)

I simper nonetheless

I gloat

(Though in a nice way)

Yes, I'm quick

Yes, I'm agile

I made up my mind some time ago

To be that way

(I remember the very day)

Today, I decided, (on that day)

I'll be quick, clean neat and efficient

A rapier of wit

A a a a a (what?)

Something quite impressive

Which I can no longer recall

Still, it was a good day

And a good decision

And, I'm glad I did it

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So, there's the frailty I disclaim

Laid bare

(Before your eyes)

The good stuff is mine

Mine and *of my doing*

The other...

Well, who can say

(I have no control over that.)

Wherever you look

If you look carefully enough

There is always a devil in wait

SEEN AND UNBELIEVABLE

It is, I believe, as Jack London said
Not something you have to see to believe
But something you can not believe
Even after you have seen it

It is, I believe, as Henry Edward Fool says
Something which is either
Immediately understood
Or cannot be explained

It is something which can be held
But can never be touched
Thought of
But not spoken of

It is both clever and fleeting
And cruel and thoughtless
It is both before you and within you
And always behind you

Emma Moonsinger

It's not a riddle

It's as much mathematics as myth

And you can wish all you want

But it cannot be tamed

So there you have it

Since you're neither coming nor going

But have decided no longer to wait

Have a seat and think about that for a moment

Then just try to forget it

It seems to have forgotten

Every last one of us

And it will forget all that follow

So, maybe just know this:

Beauty truly understood

Is crushing

BUT ONLY LISTEN TO MY TROUBLES

Only listen to my troubles and
I know you'll understand

Not my yearning
For what is that really
Not my anguish
For I have none

But there is a thing which
Resides like a mistake within me
That I cannot get close to
And cannot explain
And cannot correct
And cannot change
And can never erase

Which I know that you'll
Of course, understand

Emma Moonsinger

It fills me with doubt
By not culminating
Not taking on any physical form
Which I might confront
Alone

It persists in not being
In any real sense
Yet I continually
Subject myself
To the somewhat wobbly laws of nature
Which keep it in play

When occupied with other things
I feel the lack that this evasive thing
Instills in me
With quietly clinging claws

So, this is the part where
I turn to you
Knowing that you've

Defeated it and
Remain unastonished
As you have all these years
By anything
That I might say

In my awkward attempts
(for there have been many)
To catch and overtake myself
I've often stopped to dwell (for a moment)
And ponder
Your casual indifference

So,
You know,
That's pretty much it

I've always felt like
You're running beside me
Without really knowing
What I'm going through

Emma Moonsinger

Or what I'm getting at

Or the challenge I think we all must face

Completely alone

'Cept for you, of course

You somehow get on very nicely

Without much real contact

With your needy friends

IN THE CARELESSNESS OF AN AFTERNOON

In the carelessness of the afternoon

I dawdled

Adrift, at a small table

In a waning sunlit room

Alone I sat and raised a cup

Before my eyes

And cast those languid eyes upon it

I admired that cup

And I admired the hands that held it

And I inspected the liquid within

Hoping to find nobility there

That may or may not exist

(Though I did not, in all honesty, expect to find it there.)

And the light that enlivened the curve of that fine porcelain

With blinding clarity

Emma Moonsinger

Revealed the miracle of the hands
Which held it as well

Hands which
Were given me
Without my asking

And I didn't know
What my next move should be
Like all good weaklings I fear
Or shrug off
What I know is expected of me

DOWN A DARKENED ALLEY

Down a darkened cobblestone alley
Beside a barrel
Leaking endlessly
Through shattered wooden staves
Sits an old man writing every
English play ever written
While an ancient woman sits behind him
Weeping and at his feet
A child sits in
Expectation

Together, prey to Doubt,
With troubled eyes they search
The crevices among the stones
For evidence that tears
Were ever shed
Upon that spot

Emma Moonsinger

TOSSED ABOUT ENDLESSLY

Tossed about endlessly
Upon an unforgiving sea
We could only wait
Our prayers long depleted

The darkening sky brings grave greetings
The howling wind cruel invitation
To surrender to our fate
But too late that
We each had decided
When next given that chance
No longer to hold fast

I recall the morning with
Blinding sun extending in unbroken lines
Toward every hope in all directions
And falling upon breakfast with
The hunger of young animals
Though we had not been for years

Untroubled in our minds
Joy-drunken in our hearts
Farewell winds at our backs
The welcome draw of the open sea ahead
Seabirds circling above
Like gifts for parting guests

There was a long reign of wonder
Followed by a reign of calm
That seemed to promise lovely things
Before the monstrous swell began

We were all surprised that our tiny ship
Could withstand the repeated shock
That fell upon us so suddenly
In ringing hammer blows
Vanguard to an overtowering juggernaut
Delivering relentless dread
In merciless onslaught
Throughout the night

Emma Moonsinger

And so we clung
And so we prayed
And so we knew that we were dead
And so we prayed some more
But drained of hope
And far beyond forgiveness
We asked for neither

Long after giving up
Long after
No longer having tears to shed
No longer any fear
Hours in and out of consciousness
Surrender and weariness mixed in

The good sea leveled
Took on the false face of kindness again

Arriving from above
The West Wind quickened
And birds appeared once more

To see us home
Just as if we had never gone

With many months behind me now--
Not months but years--
I look out still with troubled eyes
And plant my feet most stubbornly
Upon this good too-stable earth
And vow
Never to set foot on any dock
Or, lean in that direction

No longer eagerly deceived
Refusing the challenge
Confronting me
I vow here, and I vow now
To never again
Go out to sea

JOKE OR NOT

Joke or not

I did not take it well

Though I dwelt among them for a while

A monstrous shapeless form

While they in graceful lines

Danced and damned me

To shameful isolation

Though silent in every possible way

My moving form

Always drew their sharp attention

Heralding my passage

With blaring searing horns

Which muster crowds for leering

And raucous disapproval

So thanks to them these days I find

Myself ever where I

Only ought to be

And know this with some bitterness
But with undying certainty:
Destruction of the mighty never comes
Joke or not

Emma Moonsinger

UNNOTICED AND UNSPOKEN

Unnoticed and unspoken
A language by all understood
I can not myself speak

But sit quietly
In distant admiration
Of those who try

And snort, loudly
Of course knowingly
At those who think they can

Such followings they always have
Such throngs they often draw
Such theatrical contrivances
They stoop to shamelessly employ

It's those unseen
Unknown

Unheralded

Except by angels

Who apply

They are not admired

They are never heard

Nor do they harbor the desire

Like birds, like flowers

But only strive

To learn that language

In the hope that they

Will in time stand at the door

With a child's grasp

Of what's expected

And like children

Once accepted

Long for nothing more

Emma Moonsinger

IF MAN IS ANYTHING

If man is anything

He is forgetful

So let me pass the blame around

As if

It isn't me we're talking about here

But you

If man is anything

He (ha-ha) is forgetful

So, let's keep moving as though

It isn't me

I'm sidestepping to avoid

Stepping instead

Upon someone else's toes

If MAN is anything

He is forgetful

If he has any skill at all

Forgetfulness is his finest

Most developed

Most refined

Carefully maintained and

Most commonly employed

(I'm surprised we haven't worn it out)

So, let's see then

What are some of the things which

We've forgotten

Whatever they are

There are those in the church

Who, knowing these things

Are torn

And those who see it as a deadly threat

And those who see it as evil incarnate

And those who see it as no threat at all

Or even non-existent

But Testis Sum Agni

Lord, let us not forget

Emma Moonsinger

LOGIC TELLS US

Logic tells us

Never mind what Logic tells us

Well, then the Law

Never mind the Law

Our instincts then

Puh...instincts

Inward struggle

What nonsense

Disastrous collapse

Now you're talkin'

From exhaustion

There you go again

I think that if we

WE?

I think that if I

YOU?

So, where to begin

 We've already began and long ago

But, to begin again

 Forgetting the past

The past can not be remedied

 But can be learned from

Not from my experience

 And whose fault is that?

Learning from the past is our struggle

 Struggle or acceptance

I'm not sure I can learn by acceptance

 Then struggle is the only way

But I'd rather not struggle

 And so will never learn

I've heard of people who wake up one day and suddenly

Speak a foreign language with great skill

Never having studied a day

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I mean I've dreamed of such things

I've dreamed of playing the piano that same way

And knowing Shakespeare's works by heart

And quoting lengthy passages from Dostoyevsky

In Russian

And flying a plane

Let me just whip up a nice soufflé

Or knit a cap

Or play a few bars of that on this old lute

I've dreamed of such things

A new husband goes to a priest and says,

"Father, we have prayed and prayed and prayed

To have a baby

And it's just not happening."

And the priest says,

"Some things require more than prayer, my son."

THERE'S SO VERY MUCH LEFT TO BE SAID

Poking around in the Templar ruins on Bezu
I discovered nothing that I had not
Brought with me, in my heart
From St. Louis

Sixteen hundred years earlier
In 410 the Visigoths departed Spain
Taking with them only
What they themselves had brought

Across the mountains
Through the lavender fields of France
They trudged

And when they got there
They plundered Rome
And left that place
With only what they had arrived there with

Emma Moonsinger

Returning to France

They erected temples throughout the south

Which, excavated by us revealed

Ransacked vaults

Whatever treasures they once held

Were lost

If, say, they had held

Genealogies dating back to the fifth century

What would we now have

That we do not now possess

The Merovignians, with what they had

Ran the Visigoths out of France

And they departed with what they had after sacking Rome

Merovich, with only what he had

Fought off Attila outside of Paris

And they both had only what they had

Before the mighty clash

And so I must face the fact
Sadly
That I went
I stayed
I turned
And returned
And studied
And read
And held artifacts in my hands
(In these very hands)

And while packing up
Or unpacking
Whether here, whether there
I had pretty much
All that I had from the beginning
And that's all I'll have
In the end

If there is sadness in that or joy
I do not know

Emma Moonsinger

THE CONFUSION OF THE AGES

Based on events of thousand of years ago

We to ourselves these days attend

But...

To what avail we know these things

Of what real use know popes and kings

Phillipe the Fair a man of will, had

Boniface VIII kidnapped to killed,

Benedict XI had he poisoned then

And, by chance I guess, had a friend

From Bordeaux appointed pope

Of course Clement V, his friend

Could then

Give the French king

Any little thing

That king--his friend--might ask

And knowing this

We now know what?

The Visigoths were unorthodox
They knew Jesus was the Son of God
But Christ, to them
Was rightly foreign
And they shrugged off Catholicism
But clung to their misunderstanding

And knowing this
We now know what?

Heathens though the Merovingians were
They could be taught orthodoxy
Demanding no need for re-education
They formed a more catholic nation
Of their own misunderstandings

Confused in the most basic sense
To them all Marys were the same
Revere the Mother or Mary the wife
They lead a happy religious life in a time
When pepper was more valued than gold

Emma Moonsinger

And knowing this

We now know what?

As we walked along the beach

I remarked at how soft the sand was that day

Pliny, I was told

1900 years earlier

One day made that same observation

And knowing this

We now know what?

LIKE A RABBIT

In the park I sat down on a bench
Next to an old man with a cane
He was smiling, laughing openly
Watching a young child running
In crazy circles
Upon the grassy sunlit knoll

“Like a rabbit, she runs,” he remarked
His laughter was warm and deep and genuine
And, gosh, I liked him immediately

“Is that your grand daughter?” I asked
“No, but her happiness makes me happy
Just as if she was,” he said
“Like a rabbit, she runs!”

I watched the child run like a rabbit for a while
Until her mother caught her up in her arms and
Carried her away

Emma Moonsinger

So, there we were

In the very heart of life

She enjoyed running

He enjoyed her enjoyment

And I enjoyed his

I like to think

From somewhere, undetected and undetectable

We are being watched

And our enjoyment

Brings enjoyment to others

As we run around down here

In crazy circles

Until someone who loves us deeply

Comes along and

Scoops us up

And carries us away

THIRST FOR WHAT

Thirst for what

Other than water

The blessing in that

Is in its simplicity

Hunger for what

Other than bread

The very fullness of life

Is found in each loaf

Yet we look around greedily

Emma Moonsinger

TO PULL MYSELF AWAY

To pull myself away from a calling path
I've taken throughout all known history—
In fact, some would say
It is history itself

Disentangled from the confusion of the ages
The simple fact that Clovis married Clothilda—
The only Catholic Princess in all of Gaul—
Means nothing to most

Vowing before battle, to be baptized if he survived
After defeating the Alamans at Strasbourg
He submitted
Then defeated the Romans near Soisson

Doves then guided him on his way to victory
Through every subsequent battle

You see--

For me now this is interesting--
Clovis displayed an express disinterest in
Conquering the Languedoc

But for me—unbaptised and unbaptisable--
To ignore the Languedoc--
My attempt to do any such thing--
Would remove a vital block in my foundation
Eleanor of Aquitaine
Joan d'Arc
Genevieve
Anne of Austria
Elizabeth Vigee-Lebrun

Long after the Carolignian dynasty was in place
Merovignian descendants with long hair
Allowed themselves to be reduced
To being hauled around the streets of Paris
Drunkenly in ox carts

These long-haired, do nothing kings

Emma Moonsinger

Were resented by everyone
Most notably the Church
Until the pope grabbed Childeric by the hair
And shaved his head in the public square

And so, now you're asking me
To unravel history
That is 1600 years old
From a comfortable spot in my library
With a smug cup held in both hands
You seem eager to learn
Because you say
You're curious

You are in fact curious, my friend
And I have no history to simply give you

Because of those who sell you books
By the Broadway ton
It's easy to think that
Sacred history is a toy

Something to be played with
For a moment's delight
(And I've done that myself
And so I know)

But this toy should be set aside
Because no one knows the cost
My fear is that the greater crime
Is too late found in ignorance

Emma Moonsinger

WHAT DARK MESSAGE

What dark message hidden in these words
Will come to you unbeknownst
By reading them

None

It takes work
It takes study
It takes understanding
None of which we've got time for

Let's sidle up to some other form of insta-wisdom
I think the buy-in for Scamology
Is something like \$3200

And, in that game
You buy your way up the ladder
Let's give them a try
I'm sure they have a fully staffed 800 number

THIS IS THE STORY

This is the story of a man who had a great secret
And left small clues everywhere
But the clues were not recognized
Like on TV
And his great secret
Was simply thrown out
With the rest of his garbage
(As will, no doubt, be mine)

I'm not saying strangers
Didn't go through his things
And take his computers
And carry off his CDs
(Oh, they did that alright!)

I'm saying that all of his good work
His study
His knowledge
His insight

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His wisdom

His humor

His kindness

His thoughts

His hopes

His accomplishments

His projects about to reach fruition

His photographs

His writing

His artistic excursions

His passion

His dreams

Were all trashed

Along with his carefully assembled library

Including the few books I loaned him

Before he died

I don't mean to trivialize this

I don't mean to be cold or cruel

They've done that for me.

I have cried over this man's departure
I have wondered why others with so much less to offer
Are allowed to stay in the old game
Linger on
Self-serving and self-satisfied and supplied by Life with
All they need to continue along their selfish childish path
Contributing nothing more than their own satisfaction

So, I guess that's it
That's a complete thought
Except for this
If it were up to me, it would be otherwise
If it were up to me, things would be different

There's the mystery you seek
It's not up to us
And at times the entire mess looks
Just so stupid and thoughtless and cruel

He was a good man

REJECTION

Philip the Fair, king of France

Had his application to join the Templars---REJECTED

Not surprisingly I'd say

On the very next available Friday

October, 13, 1307

Every Templar in France was rounded up and

Placed under arrest

(And their goods confiscated also)

So, not be outdone by himself

Philip the Fair, king of France

First slapped and then arrested Boniface VIII

Who then very timely died

Some say of the humiliation of it all

And, Philip the Fair, King of France

Had the papal seat moved to Avignon

Where, with pomp and ceremony

Both right well suited

He appointed an old friend Pope

DISADVANTAGED BY NATURE

Whatever it may look like to you
Disadvantaged by Nature, I fall
Inside I fall
And I continue to fall

And I know that this is not
A TV talk show for women
But I continue to fall
And it gets pretty frightening at times

And I don't expect anyone to hear me
And I don't expect anyone to understand
And to know that others are falling too
Brings me no comfort

And I am not bitter that
No one sees my hurt
But I know how
They look at me

Emma Moonsinger

In our world

Whatever we may profess

We look at the blind

We look at the deaf

We look at the lame, the ugly

As having somehow brought their plight

Down upon themselves

No matter what we may say

On those days when I walk with a cane

I am guilty

Or unworthy

When I am seen at all

And, whatever it may look like

From that side of this smile

On this side, on the inside

I continue to fall

And at times

I feel like I've been shoved

OF HIS OFFSPRING

Of his off-spring only one seemed content
Not to expand
Their sniveling power beyond
What lands they already held
Good heavens
I don't think I've ever seen a more beautiful sky
How does all this grit get in between the sheets?

He was looked upon as a do-nothing King
But with the exception of his third son
You know, it's the dog, I know it's the dog
I don't know why he insists

If I painted a sky like that
No one would believe me
They'd all say
Postcard sky, never been a sky like that
He carries half the beach home with him

Emma Moonsinger

Well, so, *Of his offspring* only one seemed
If I painted those clouds EXACTLY that color
Precisely that color
No one would ever think it real
And it's not just the sand either
Why does he leave bits of dog biscuit behind

Looks at me as if I am his last hope for
Survival
Hasn't eaten in a week, poor dog
Then he leaves chucks of dry food in my bed

Do-nothing king
Please be kind enough not to forget your poor
Starving
Hungry helpless dog

The dog that I walk along the beach each day
Is that the one of which you speak
The one I boil a week's worth of eggs for each Friday
Is that the poor starving creature to which you refer

But I really wonder why they are never content
With the lands they have
Most of them don't seem to be able to handle
It's probably unfair of me to blame it all on the dog
Of course, but I really
Wow, was that lightening

Yes, you saw it too huh?
Come here, it's OK
It's OK, it's OK
Come here
Come on
Jump up
Jump up here with me
That's a good boy
I know how frightening lightning can be

Look what I have here
I know you prefer turkey
With the *exception* of his third son

Emma Moonsinger

THE DEVIL HIMSELF

The Devil himself

Crowned the Pope himself

The man who crowned himself king

Then he himself was crowned by the Pope

Just to make sure there were no loose ends

So, well, none of this

Took place in secret

None of it

Was done so that no one would ever know

The participants all took pride in their shameful acts

As part of that act, at the Pope's request

The king was crowned by the Pope again

Here's where humility comes in

Sideways, through a window in the back

He did not call himself Pope

The other did not call himself King

SO LET'S START HERE

So, let's start here

Shall we?

Constantine's mother

Quagmired in the old ancestral home

Ventured out cautiously at first

In a Jerusalem-like wayward leisurely direction

Guided by a dream and nothing more pernicious

(though I'm not entirely sure what pernicious means)

She—St. Helena to be—

Using only her nose

And instinct

And that dream we just mentioned

Well, and perhaps some spiritual intervention

“Guided by the fragrant aroma of the crypt,” we're told

Discovered part

Not a LARGE part, but part nonetheless

Of the One True Cross

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You know the one

The one upon which Jesus had been hung

So set that aside for a moment

And consider this

By the fragrance of it (by the fragrance of it)

We're told

St. Ambrose found a fairly impressive cache of skeletons

All martyrs

Undoubtedly and irrefutably all martyrs

And carrying them away from their various resting places

Despite the oversight

Of some very basic religious etiquette

Recognized by almost every sect of

every religion known to man

Put these things—for lack of a better word

(though there are many I'm sure)

In the basilica which he had had

Constructed constructed

Far in advance for that very purpose.

So add all of that up

And see what you get

The quandary—for me--arises

Each afternoon

When the dog-in-law arrives

And placing himself directly under my nose

Collapses in a dog-like rug-like form

Stinking up the place

In a manner which only the French would deny

Others in the room

French every last one of them

Claim not to smell a thing

This animal produces no scent at all

(Nor does he slobber)

Me, book in hand

Always overly sensitive of nose

Develop each day at this time

Emma Moonsinger

A kind of affection-based resentment
Knowing that I now
No longer have any chance at sniffing out
The vestiges of crosses, true or not
Or the skeletal remains of martyrs
Though I have a little spot set aside
In the vitrine

You know, in the off-chance

Certain things
Must always wait
What's truly important
Must continually be set aside

And, I know it's wrong of me
But, if I NEVER
Sniff out any part of the One True Cross
Or find myself drawn to any martyr's bones

I blame it on the dog-in-law

THESE ARE THE THINGS

These are the things we must consider

During our daily toil

In Venice they—you know, THEY—

Claim to have the clavicle of St. Sebastian

In an independent survey people have chosen to have their

Thoughts replaced by an *authorized* thought merchant

In 390, two French monks

While searching for other things entirely

In the ruins of some old castle

(Herod's)

Discovered what was undoubtedly

The cranium of John the Baptist—

It could be no other--

And they made no secret of it

Much of this

Seems inconceivable to many

Discerning people

Emma Moonsinger

Yet these and other thoughts—

When will the car be ready?

I wonder if that guacamole's still good

Oh man, did I leave my keys in the door again?

Drive us with spurs and heavy boots

Through the live-long day

Meanwhile—as Bob Dylan warns—

Outside

Life goes on all around us

So, you know

It's quite a mess

And please I beg you god or gods

Remove a few things from this menu

And then let me have another look at it

I'm sure I'll find something

To my taste

I THINK BIRDS

I think birds would be a good final thought
The final thought being
A doorway to
Gloriously open-ended slack-jawed speculation

Something about their flight is always said
Oh, how we wish we could
That sort of tripe
And mankind's centuries old desire
To conquer the air

But the thing about birds is not
The casual way they take to the air
Or their miraculous pinpoint migration
Though how we still don't know

I don't want to lose you at this point
I'm no longer trying to win you over either
(So, feel free to simply quit.)

Emma Moonsinger

Birds though

The thing about birds is not
The way they glide and bank
And wheel and drift upon the wind
In the magic of their way

Their dedication as parents
Is remarkable of course
And their trust in humans
Can not be denied
Sometimes expressed in indifference
They are like cats in that way

But the assurance that possesses them
That this is a kindly world
Where they can always find what they need
Is the most remarkable thing about them

To find another bird
No matter how far away
By song

Is a beautiful thing

Their trust in that alone

Is a beautiful thing

And wondrous

To think about

And it only becomes more beautiful

And more wondrous

The more thought you give it

I wish I could lay my hands on such trust

If only for a delirious day or two

I've never held it for a minute