Kitchens At Night

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Contents

7 Aide-mémoire
8 Curriculum Vitae
9 Memory is a Wardrobe
10 Rachael's Coat Inside Out
11 Pine Box in the Flea Market
13 Quiche
14 Pinball
15 The Goatfish
16 The Émigré
17 The Pineapple Massage
18 Tabernacle
19 Polyphemus
20 Approach to Chilli
21 The Triangle
22 Approach to an Egg
23 Barmbrack
24 My Last Consultation
26 Eclectus
27 Fado With Garlic Crusher
28 Listening to Joni Mitchell's *Blue* While Cooking Peposo
29 Self-Checkout

A storm piles up behind the house.
– *Elizabeth Bishop, 'Squatter's Children'*

I think a bird, and it begins to fly.
– *Theodore Roethke, 'The Exulting'*

Aide-mémoire

A goat has been following me for hours. There is a sign
hung around his neck that reads NEVER FORGET.
That's not very original I think but I'll see where it leads.
'I have no grá for you goat,' I say, and clap my hands, say, 'Go!'
His goat eye asks if I am half cracked. 'Grand,' I say,
and keep walking. He follows at a discreet distance, beard
jigging crooked as he jaws blankly at some grass he cropped
years ago, I suppose. What am I meant to remember?
Leaves are smeared on the street, a salad of dragged newspaper.
Nobody appears to notice what is following me. I detour
into a dive bar, roll a cigarette, drink a double whiskey
and try to decide where, if anywhere, all this might connect.
Goat stands by the door, NEVER FORGET dripping to the tiles.
I watch wet leaves fibrillate outside the window, think
of the small, delicate feather on this morning's egg. Leaf, light,
leaf, light. Quick silverfish glimpses of a freedom that spooks
on approach. The goat chews on, relentless. I mash my cigarette,
touch my ear, and it comes off.

Curriculum Vitae

after Charles Simic

I'm demonstrating the excellence of this potato peeler
to an audience who could well be allergic to spuds.
I'm playing the glass harp dressed head to toe in carrageen moss
with a tin can for coins and peculiar weather in my sock.

That's why the daffodil in my buttonhole has that drastic look.
That's why I keep a baseball bat by the bedpost.
I stand around incongruous as party glitter on a coffin lid
with my inevitable questions: *mustard, or ketchup?*

Ah to be hang gliding over the Cork and Kerry mountains –
the going so smooth, it could be sponsored by
a sports drink. That's not a living it's a spaceship, baby.
Still the anxiety persists like an immoderate flugelhorn

and every day's a busted longing somewhere and a boss
like, Withero, catch this monkey.

Memory is a Wardrobe

— Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space

I had the blue suitcase open on the floor,
packed cardboard boxes. I thought of Rimbaud's *Le Buffet*,
that scuffed oak wardrobe, how it opened up to him
like an old woman lost for words, tongue torn between
come in / clear off. I'm standing at the wardrobe
now, as though turning the next page
in a good crime novel, and want to sleuth for clues—
follow up that suggestion of perfume or fruit,
that all too often escapes me in seconds, back to
something like contentment for once. I mean, again.
There must be a shoebox of marbles, duelling cards
still buried at the back, beyond the stiff shirts
whispering to each other of the stranger, set adangle
on wire hangers. And beneath them, two drawers that
bruise inwards with the shadow of rich red wine.
I knew this woman who'd shut her larkspur-blue eyelids,
tilt head back, the better to see detail bleeding from
a story. I close my eyes, and some version of the poem
returns: *It's some rush, this interior wilderness* ...
But I forget the rest. The poem disappears in its edition
between others that walk straight through to the sunlight
over the hills, and it clicks that home is where the hurt
is, or has been, or will be.
No buffing the blunt scuffs
from its scarred face, the wardrobe. But I know
it knows a thing or two though it's not letting on
when I open back the sly doors and it whistles.

Italicised lines are from my own version of Arthur Rimbaud's poem 'Le Buffet'. This poem is commonly translated as 'The Sideboard'.

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