

My Thousand Novel



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MY THOUSAND NOVEL / POEMS

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I would ask the help of stones and branches

Frank Stanford

TO ALL OTHER THINGS WHAT I PREFER MOST IS THINKING WHAT I REALLY THINK

To all other things what I prefer most is thinking what I really think
Even if I cannot say the words in a blue room dressed with diners and
recognized official faces dripping with very little save advice and allergies
Outdoors is a garden dripping with ferns where comes an orange-eyed cat
with a green branch, with a hollow green branch he has strung like a guitar
My blue hand slips in to scratch behind his pearly ear and then flies off
again like a bird: he turns his head like he would begin
but that was a bird
Why is it so far off
I can tell you how selfish I've become, this wasn't a necessary transformation
I am telling you this as you look for the bird, I lie back with my back bent
over a star, with my long scaled back wrapped around a star
now sucking the hot tip of my finger
the face of the cat is your face and it burns
you smile like so many kitchens, pulling your white fur socks up
to make your way back to the party
Meanwhile the only thing filling my body is money
Now and then the scent of lucre drips from my eye in a gooey pearl
The people inside love a musical cat
The stars retreat like wheels

SLIDING ACROSS SANDS AT A REGULAR PACE DON'T YOU HURRY UP SO MUCH SWEET

Sliding across sands at a regular pace don't you hurry up so much sweet
thing get a taste for bells while you still can
see all the horses love them, just rubbing their teeth against their flanks
All in a night of summer: we were traveling so fast, and as I think I've said
I was traveling even inside this travel, like—
like a dove with a bell in its mouth flying up the running train
A little play in the flame when a bird flies through it no doubt
a white bird painted black with its own ashes, its own inky eye flitting
around in its head, wondering, is that what I just did?
Yes, I say, tossing the die, planting a tree in the table with its
twenty-one eyes, til the cube is blank and lovely, till the cube is the best
Now no more guessing, I tell my friend the burnt birdie: Oh really? quoth he
drawing from beneath his wing a branch:

MY EYES SHAKE WITH A MOTOR OF SUGAR INSIDE THEM AND MY EYES HUM LIKE BEES

My eyes shake with a motor of sugar inside them and my eyes hum like bees
They know what a vacation is, and they know the placid rectangle of the weekend
when it comes to haunt a collared shirt
No one knows how to leave a lasso in the sky for hours on end except for
the winged man I met, and then later, with a pay-increase, my shadow knows
My shadow, it follows me on cherry-colored feet sipping water from a red leaf, its other hand stuck in an
envelope
Oh sweet bells sinking in honey, do you do what you do for the curl of a single eye or for many
Do we all run away just to look dewy
I know what you are thinking, you think this is born of resentment, that
I come to the very boring side of your bed with the tin ear of one who has learned nothing
But nothing's so much for a young girl
Nothing is her bread and slash of butter
We should do this every day: I'll stay in here and watch the man in the bright
hat digging a grave just beyond my door
You will exhale a petunia cloud, you will grow thoughts with plump wheels
You are riding to town

I SAW WHITE FLOWERS RACE TO COVER MY EYES

I saw white flowers race to cover my eyes
I saw the city with all eight white legs in the ocean
I saw string bridges
I saw wind press a page to the building
I saw strangers asleep
I saw a man kneel in his uniform
I saw the seventeenth century in a dream
I saw the curved hands of animals disappear in the grass
I saw a boy with one ear and a girl with a seam on her face
I saw the view of the red clock tower
I saw a man carry his sleeping child
I saw your face hidden
I saw the face of the president
I saw trees shake in the morning
I saw sparrows in a wheel from the train
I saw the green tear of sleep before it left your eye
I saw a white haze before the tree
I saw the room fold itself in half
I saw a boy put a cigar in his teeth
I saw my uncle marry his wife
I saw the white band of the afternoon just above the earth
I saw the sharp mouth of the bird stay open
I saw a girl push the looks from her eye
I saw fists of light
I saw painted earth
I saw the road fall under a hill
I saw the last light's red arrow
I was trying to keep you awake
I saw the blue land under a storm

IT COULD BE A KIND OF HATRED FOR YOU, MY OFFERING: WHAT IF WE CALL IT THAT

It could be a kind of hatred for you, my offering: what if we call it that
Here in the big, big public worlds, paths of chalky mystique stretching out
to the horizon: I can't be like myself here, generalize the head to "good"
and that should do the trick, that should be enough to allow us to
get back to the process without discussion

It means nothing for me to lean towards you and whisper a string of birds
And whisper a necklace of clicking clay balls, the padded glossy one
the dog took in her teeth the other night off of the sidewalk and I kept
getting worried because I did not have a leash for her

People who say that it's a good idea to go to school are wrong.
No one in school thinks it's a good idea. No one out of school can tell
you what you want apparently, they just do not have the tools, they just
do not have the time and the correct flexibility of "however" to understand
what living inside a perfect time is like: what it is like
to have another Euclidean hour and then the shiny white
we must be up against, how much time is this taking

IT'S NOT A PERSON WHO TEACHES YOU TO SPEAK: THAT IS AN OBSERVATION I CAN MAKE UNDER THE NIGHT SKY

It's not a person who teaches you to speak: That is an observation I can make under the night sky
held down under a long pin, the clock shoots up to the center of the year
The clock smiles under its mustache hefting a rope in its hands, ready to demonstrate its skill
But I'm turning my back on that, let the seconds sew themselves where they may
It grows very quiet on the reverse, on the inside of the pond
at the back of the glittering suicide's neck, where none but a stray trout comes
to touch with thready bluish lips the skin and hairs of one who threw
himself from the window of a plane, no who dropped
from the basket of a balloon in passing, now who
is not remembered. What was it about the seeds he strung?
The trout will never know. The trout fits itself back into the canoe
of its muddy nest and sleeps under the winter
The trout is sleeping like a stick inside its dream when it learns to speak
And it emits a copper key whole like a domesticated animal emerging from its mouth
And I'm going to reach down now and get
this item, I am standing at the bottom of the world, on my right the
gate of red horn, on my left the gate of ivory
White roots hang from the ceiling above, and behind my back I hear the
paper bodies of unlucky souls
I remember the argument as it was put to me
Does the man leave by the gate of false dreams? Or no I stretch my arm

THEY DON'T SAY THE RIGHT THING TO HER IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT YOU TOLD ME

They don't say the right thing to her it's as simple as that you told me
You spoke so quick though that it was difficult to determine if
you had used my name when referring to her or her own
What was that old carnival trick anyway, sawdust falls in a perfect U
and then a horse falls more quickly than a grain of sand and higher up where no light travels
the human race finds a lantern fish with one bright testicle
glued to the end of its forehead-hair like an eye
Did you also find that ironic?
That it gave light but could not see—
And as I said these words I saw that little rainbows like the size of cats
had just finished propagating around the room
Can we sit on those? I asked you
Yes and no you told me drawing a blade from your eyebrow and slicing one in half
A violet puff of sulfur—

WHAT WOULD WE DO WITH OURSELVES, I AM ASKING, READY TO COMMIT MYSELF TO

What would we do with ourselves, I am asking, ready to commit myself to
a mile of heather, to a very long run far from the mountains along flat
terrain, all I see is the horizon

I leave all else behind in order to weather the present, in order to convert it to the perfect
log cabin, there is so much to think about in time, but then when we begin
to look very carefully at time itself, nothing happens, just

watching a ruby letter change on the stovetop, I want not to remember

I want just to swim down the aisle to the cove with the best rain and the best
barge with the best face and the best chain of all loading onto the
dock and different every afternoon every time I swoop down from the ceiling
and pick off another infant, says the politician in a certain satire of which
I can no longer remember the name: if you are ill, in the forest, drinking
from the cup of the lily that sweet water like rain, if you are fatigued
over nothing, like a contestant in a world of beauty in which the face itself
at times will not stay on, in which a satin ribbon burns like the sun and
all this time there is not an inch of space left

for YOU whoever that was, only a slender splinter whittled in the shape of an
ivory coast, a somewhere so far off

It can mean what I mean when I get down to business and say something like I
might want to deny you your due, it's only an attempt to be

helpful, to save a kind of grace which is in effect living now in the parking
lot in the body of a pigeon, eating gravel and mints for its lunch and thus
remaining untouched, only that, like if we could spend a week sleeping
only that: grass grows over my ears and I am not frightened, the beard
grows over my body and I cannot speak, the earth encloses my arms and the
white snakes cover my legs: nobody can ask you to leave with them, even if
they would like that, or dream that, or catch that thought as it fell from
heaven into a silver prospector's sieve: no one has any more power than
the rest of us, to keep living after we live

PICK UP YOUR PENCIL RIGHT NOW AND DRAW THE FIGURE WHO IS TELLING YOU

Pick up your pencil right now and draw the figure who is telling you
You cannot live in the world
Who has that face now whose lips with an inner coating of enamel
Hollows in his breath where some idealized vagrant stops to piss and sing
An old commercial
If only I were beautiful
If only the mines of sulfur and of quartz were real
The bridge of salt that studs my upper lip
The paw of a white kitten inside my nap
You are useless to me overnight
You are way too much like me
Will you be awake when the sky is lit with zeros
Fantasy of red horses and helicopters sewn to give away
A lot of people tell you no one loves
And I will lie but say the same

YOU AREN'T SCARED OF ME, THAT'S TOTALLY A COMPLETE TOTAL LIE! WOW I EXCLAIM

You aren't scared of me, that's totally a complete total lie! Wow I exclaim
climbing down from my skyscraper in order to take a look at yours, if
only we were the same size as human people, there would be so much more to worth
and so much more sense to the idea of assessment
As is, I think I'd rather eat this bus, and when I eat it, you will
understand I mean that I will breathe on it
and place it to the right of my eight tusks and later bathe in the ocean
where I realized I was accorded this amazing dignity, in other words I learned something
The blue whale is the largest mammal on earth
and I heard its pipe, I heard it singing: you are aware that one
could not force a knitting needle through my ear
And when the light jumped into my eye, I waded out a little farther
I took the whale gently in my claws as its supermilky eye rolled up
Freedom! Civilization! I want to launch you into the air as I launched that whale
I want you to wait for me, asleep, on the side of a mountain

IT IS STARTING TO CHANGE RIGHT AT THIS MOMENT AND I CAN ACTUALLY BRING YOU

It is starting to change right at this moment and I can actually bring you
with me, there will be no need for an argument and no need for you to go
downstairs to lace your thighs over me or to tie them on tighter still
I promise not to do any appearing this evening
I promise not to mix myself in the buttery stream of your automated answering
system and to live like a nun without the appeal of forms or any recourse
to a signature or a walk.
The moon inside the television has a terrible appeal, and I so
want to climb out of your breast again. I can hear the moon
It is talking about wiping marks from very important glass, and
also it is going on about a kind of sweating sickness in which victims
are known to pass their bodies through themselves.
But isn't that what we are doing? And I want
to climb out of you and tell you what I heard was being discussed
but you are busy using the surface for a very important ritual
I would not want the delicate motor you are brushing with a needle to
become the hair of a camel and fall into the dainty slip of the electric
socket here in our plastic home
Things can get so little around me. Things!
I've just always loved going on about them, trying to lift them if they
looked sticky or putting them in the appropriate type of away if they
were granular. And I say, you aren't getting worried about me are you?
I'm so lonely inside the gorilla. Lonely and special

I HAVE BEEN AWAKE FOR OVER 10 YEARS

I have been awake for over 10 years
It has taken me quite a number of attempts to arrive at this figure,
there was of course the famous time I became enamored of a pair of
Rossignol skis and lay down inside the mountain to relax upon them and fell into
a white space, bright like the dots on the faces of a pair of ball-bearings
I can still hear the sighs of the tiny children, they were such
a miracle of upstarts, I had to keep them in my basket
I was in a cotton field, I was tucked behind the laborer's ear, a
man who told me Wake up, He told me wake up Alistair
though I have always been a woman, He said, In the future they are tying you
across a wire fence, are you free in this scenario?
The cotton dinged in the summer breeze, its fat heads like the
stars of garlic I had known as a child
And I said, NO! That can't possibly happen! This is only a book
But the man took me with him into his own sleep at the heart of which
there was indeed a book, someone had stuck a stick through it
What is this supposed to mean? I asked him, drawing myself up to my full
magical stature and commanding silky boots to appear over my
calves and my thighs, thus concealing the fact that I had only a pair
of peep's wings where my legs should have been—
and he took me into his hand and showed me the millions of clouds which
were stapled into the ceiling. How did those get there? he asked me
I don't know, I replied, looking down at the hundreds of dandelion-eyed
cats who were weaving a pipe-cleanery infinite around his ankles near the
floor. I wouldn't want you to be the first person to answer this
question, he told me: and with that I awoke. And with that I awoke. And
with that

YOU JUST END UP TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF, WHAT LOOKS FROM HERE LIKE A WIDE

You just end up talking about yourself, what looks from here like a wide
wide puffy skirt, you end up not wanting more than what could have done
harder
yes I recognize this

Disturbed me a jack at my ankle, does that: turning and rolling like
a shooter over my front door

I hurried back to the house which had been provided
Thankfully, I thought: doing up the knots along my cupboard
no one will see what I have within

I HAD TIME TO MYSELF WHICH WAS CONFUSION

I had time to myself which was confusion
I had powers
I had aces in my sleeve and a daisy
I had an antidote and a limit
I had willingness
I had a tight envy that rounded out the hours
I had a wing I gave away
I had a sash of light over my eyes
I had a scissors in my hands
I had the sentence you said before speaking
I had a father who laid down in the air
I had a father with a white stamp in his mouth
I had a string to carry what I needed
I had to walk across the city
I woke up underneath the earth
I had long lines painted on me
I had early morning and a book of frozen rivers
I saw young girls with a red line through their eyes
I had no way to speak
I had a thick way of seeing to him
I had gold no one could see
I had a throwing rock
I had an open mouth
I had no one when I was gentle
I had ten tries to move towards the center of the road
I had sixteen arrows on the page
I had one hundred arrows on a cloud
I had a tiny stitch on the back of my hand
I broke the heat of the sun into pieces
I had a window and a sword

POEM

1

She does not like that very nice man
She does not like that very nice man on wheels with the face of salt
She does not like to live for three thousand years dripping and falling over her own whisper
She does not live for a week like a dromedary, stupid fringe of crystal sticking out from her eye
If it's what she wants
If it's lips and teeth and tiny white hair
Why not end every adjective with an "e"
Why not point to the wound on your thigh in public
Discuss how you are perfect, then TELL ME
I will treat you to a vision quest
You are my mother
This is a task, not writing
This is a task, not writing
Ok, knock three times then put the pillow over your face
Now wake up and you are a curtain of vapor just leaving the bar
Cool cement exists below your hem
Cool cement laid over this city
O tiny cloud now rise and hang a left at the pearly bulb of the moon
Krill shall wave their threads at you in the black ocean of space
Sure we are lost in particles and time
I can only say to myself, "I loved you once"
A happy world in which by "you" I mean me
And travel off to another corner to enjoy my spoils in peace
Don't I want to keep being alive
Just like any thing else it goes into the distance

2

She does not have to spell, "It happens"
She does not keep a list of bad thoughts or alternatives
She does not saddle a rose and ride
She does not live if she doesn't
Considering cute names for animals
A tiny cat with a face like a lemon could cry in one woman's arms
That light in the covered garage
That melted note of human voices

3

If her feet fall off, she floats above the center of the earth
She rises past the sweaty velvet lawn
And a sweet man resting below the nylon floor of the inflated pool
She does not quiver at the frozen legs of the rabbit stuck in a headlight on the road
She waits on the back of a flying arrow
Who knows where we may all live next
Yellow birds cross their eyes like straws in the nest
Are you scared
Hop hop I clear the road
Are you frightened of the green light of the imaginary alligator or the long whispers of the toad
Would you rather be invisible or fall asleep
Lie or believe
Wait for the rest of your life or never live again
Which is it
You are the child with blue eyes or you are not
You are either the man whose family name is ticking now and will end in a bright bell or you aren't
Or you are

OH LOOK THERE'S STILL SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE

Oh look there's still something happening here
Well not exactly here but you know what I mean
Yes: now you will know what I mean
How the funny tigers soak their paws in milk
How the funny bankers hide their eyes
How the funny thinker makes itself get thinner
How the funny rover keeps his name on
He keeps it on by traveling
All across the west side and all across the east, entering the blue gate of the sun
Having a ticket and a card and
Watching ribbons and o's of tissue paper dropped from every window in the city
Yes his white hands open on the rooftop
Yes this won't make any sense
But finish your story, maestro, says a boy from out the silence
I am so tired
Ten white ferns joggle in the rain
Do you see, says the person telling the story
That the moment rushes up to you and cannot be fought off
I mean when you get really close
The countertop in a transaction
What can you expect from yourself?
And that I suppose is the question (what)
Tugging the tip of one silvery antler
Is—what?

IN ORDER TO SEE THE FACES OF PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN EXPELLED FROM THEIR

In order to see the faces of people who had been expelled from their
country, I would return from the next life
To hear the wiry buzz of the car stereo and see the tiny doll netted to an
antenna,
waving its short blue eyes—
Gravel falls and comes to rest in an apartment courtyard
I am unemployed and get drunk at the center of the day
How to address what is *possible*, can I just go to what already happened
lifting my soft hat in lieu of tipping anybody—and say:
Show us this is not what is possible, show us I at least know nothing about my former life
Show us a man with a thousand novels
Show us a match training smoke in the shape of a fish
Isn't it necessary, please, just one thing?
How pretty it is to read the sentence
You never will know why you lived

SOMEBODY NEEDS TO SAY WHAT HE REALLY MEANS, THAT'S MY CURRENT FOREMOST OPINION

Somebody needs to say what he really means, that's my current foremost opinion
or "intention," come to think of it
Why o why have I been blessed
not to land on a single image only keep circling round the aggregate
("the crowd") hoping
for an open inch of will
Believe me, as I believe you, and we can both go down in flames
We can remember, we already have knowledge of each other, as in
the deep, deep past
gold geraniums glowing where your eyes had been as you were laid to rest
in a canoe below the earth
Whatever
It gets to the point where the king does nothing
Yet let a man with a baseball bat appear to contact this skull—
ahh here comes a sea of gauzes ready to escort me home
the mermaid on her skate of pearls
and certain curtains floating all over the stage, etc, but what IS that?
When you are so lone and ancient in your little interior doll and ready
not to invent a single fucking thing
And ready to sew your own face into an impervious envelope
And keep notes in a book of days
Let it be said that what she wrote was so much like what had happened as to be
"very much like it"
Let it be said in that case it was hard to find her
Snuggled up with so much truth
the white bound to blind us, "WE" who sought "her"
And of course at this point it must be admitted nobody was here
save the speaker
clapping her two wooden faces
so that all the water sticking to them
fell
and the river which grew from her doorstep—
No one cares now if there is a river

TO FIND THE PARTICULAR PLACE AND THEN TO HOLD ONTO IT

To find the particular place and then to hold onto it
The streets were wet where I was walking, what a phenomenal force she used to be
I said to myself as a white wraith rode out on a rope of light that went
Straight out horizontal from one eye of an ambulance
Burning rubber, the on-off flashes, getting away and just thinking
That's ok, I tell myself, trying to enter one of the clouds passing overhead
I keep remembering what you said before we watched those stupid videos
And now how I peel the sticky paper off my eyes
You can't look at your own ability to see, you have to just look
So I want to: at the candles jumping across the table on the tv
over the knifed-in name of the devil
They lock him in the ceiling
He makes a kingdom of the air, showing his teeth, making both a rule and a display out of his feeling
walking the long earth so active he can never get over it
How have I come to aspire to this also
From my forehead grow two wispy antennae and I go past a lot of stores
carrying gray boxes in my skull and putting your cool words in them
(Delight)
Have you ever thought it is strange how you have to talk to so many people each day who don't need
your existence
Who don't need your weird existence like
I don't need yours, reader
O push the clouds away, O push away the thick silk mat of me coming towards you
Push now the barrier in your mouth
A whole hill of tissue a whole room
We either say no words or weep into it

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