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Sutra of the Heart

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Sutra of the Heart

The heart is a white mountain
left of center in the world.
The heart is dust. The heart is trees.
The heart is snowbound broken
rock in the locked ribs of a man
in the sun on the shore of the sea who is dreaming
sun on the snow, dreaming snow on the broken
rock, dreaming wind, dreaming winter.

The heart is a house with torn floorboards.
The heart is a seeded and peeled
grape on the vine, a bell
full of darkness and anvils.
The heart is a flute with four fingerholes
played in the rain.
The heart is a well dug upward.

The heart is a sandstone canyon in the high
Triassic fields, inhabited by grass,
postherds and scapulae, femurs and burnt corn,
with horned men and mountain sheep
painted and pecked in the straw-colored walls.

The heart is three bowls
always full and one empty.
The heart is a four-winged
bird as it lifts and unfolds.
The heart is a full set of goatprints,
a pocket of unfired clay and a stray
piece of oatgrass:
two fossils: one locket;
a drenched bird squawking from the perch
in its overstuffed cage.

The heart is a deep-water sponge
tied up with smooth muscle in two
double half-hitches, sopping up blood
and twice every second wrung out like a rag.

The heart is a grave
waking, a corpse walking, a tomb
like a winter well-house, pulsing
with blood under the wilted noise
of the voices. The heart is a cut root
brooding in the worn earth,
limping, when no one is watching,
back into the ground.

The heart is four hands serving soup
made of live meat and water.
The heart is a place. The heart is a name.

The heart is everything, but nothing
is the heart. The heart is lime and dung and diapers
in a hole. The heart is wood. The heart is
diamond and cooked turnip, lead and precious metal,
stone. The heart is light. The heart is cold.

The heart is a smoking saxophone rolled
like a brass cigar in a mouth
like the mouth of Ben Webster,
something perforated, folded,
always emptying and filling,
something linking aching air
and a wet, shaking reed.

The heart is four unintersecting
strokes of the brush in Chinese,
with these homophones:
daylight, zinc, firewood, bitterness, joy,
earthbreath and lampwicking,
up which the blood is continually rising.

The heart is a pitcher of untasted water.

The heart is a white mountain
which the woman in the moon,
her left breast full of cellos and her right
breast full of violins,
climbs and is sometimes carried
up and down.

The heart is found
in the leaking bucket of the ribs,
in the distant hills, in the lover's
body, the belly, the mouth,
in the empty wheel between the knees.

The heart is being
knowing only that it is;
the heart is dumb; the heart is glass.

The heart is dust
trees locket rock sponge
white mountain peeled stone
house flute bell rain

The heart is being aching, being
beating, being knowing being
that not what not
who not how not why
it is the beating that it is.