

CAM copy
copy sent to
ASL
Papers 2/2/05
Catawba-Lachman

To:

CATAWBA EARLY FALL 1977

to Vera

Picked near the front porch in July,
With magenta flowers,
green-golden,

The horsemint tea in the turquoise cup
still savors of summer as the apple smell
rises from the meadow lap.

Pink yarrow
before the fireplace
looks rich with the creamy white
in their silver pot -
in back, the soft blacks in the fireplace.
The thick florets
cast little exquisite shadows on the concrete hearth.

Outside,
hemlock glitters in light autumnal,
sun still high, leaf cover thinning -
now big patches of sun
light the still glowing green of the grass
under the two great oaks before the house.

Vera,

this is our autumn, our glory-prime
of final fruiting, our time
of great individuation, each
tree a different color, each leaf,
and on every leaf many colors.

In the wind sweep
long slim trunks swing,
each tree at its own tempo
and Ah!
fingertip titillation of leaves.

In the frosty night
already through windblown boughs
of the two old oaks before the house
you can see stars.

I'm clearing the land:
Think!
the axe
deep bites white heartwood;
gracefully the tree,
limbs outspread, falls back
at the speed of a sigh.

The scythe tingles in the ragweed
feeling the beautiful curves of earth
with a knife -
level with the ground hold the blade,
tip up a bit - and with a slight hip twist -
and as with a musical instrument freely and precisely
swing!

I unchoke the grass
freeing the apples,
carving close to the edges, revealing the meadow -
Ah! - surely, Vera! landscaping's
the most satisfying art
(Spencer Holst and Edgar Poe have said it).

With mad abandon the tree wind
infallibly graceful performs ballet.
To watch the wind
in the Bolick's pasture toss the hilltop
acropoli of trees, first behind the twin maple
then a heartbeat later the turmoil
overwhelms our hill where I stand.

Free the line
of the land, of Flattop Mountain,
starting at hill crest above
the ballfield, down glide,
cross Citadel path in front of
Main House (where are two old cherry trees)
past cottage through woods down
through Bolick's pasture till the mountain ends - or begins -
by our Boone Road entrance at the old Ranch Motel.

Clear! Clean!
of cluttering:
ugly weed,
the rag, dull, colorless,
uneven tops obscure.
the beautiful sweep of earth-forms
the long graceful lines of this ancient mountain;
its wiry texture
betrays the wind with its stiff jig;
- and how unlike! - grass is grace!
trembles confessionally on the earth breast -
reveals as it covers,
perfect earth fur.

Swami Muktananda says
 the world is Shakti, Chiti, Mother Kundalini,
 what Jews call Shekhinah, and Christians
 Holy Ghost, Spirit of God, of Truth, Creator, Comforter;
 in the beginning the Spirit of God
 moves
 on the face of the deep.

Red, ruby, rust, orange, flame, maples coral,
 pink, peach,
 Birches light yellow, oaks copper, gold,
 hydrangeas rose
 a-stipple on each other and the blue blue sky.

Muktananda says the enlightened may see
 the sport of Shakti
 vibrating forth in many forms, revelling
 on any dirty city street; but even the fool
 may find it here -
 the grass aroma
 sun sparkle on leaves
 leaf chatter and laughter;
 long smiling mountain lines,
 ecstatic moan of swaying trees, each a violin,
 the wind hugely bowing.

Yes, joyous Chiti curls herself
giggling silently like a child
hiding in a game,
into the dazzling pure close white hearts
of little sapling locust trees and sassafras
where I grave my axe
to preserve the grass.

I went down to the spring - white snakeroot's
tiny snowballs and rank leafage of big dark green hearts
by the path - all gone, leaves fill the path
(the hill's north side is frosted soonest)
- and - late September glory!
- pink, rose, red, coral - different
colored maple leaves' starry forms on the glossy
semi-clear dark green water, rippling, speckled,
like a trout's back, of the old pool.

I remember coming here first over thirty years ago,
jungle all 'round the pool, murky brown
and icy the mountain spring water
where we bathed, you
in a black suit and white cap -

Vera, we were young then; boys
nearing forty now, frisked 'round us,
heard Homer far-eyed on the hill, sang
Bach among oaks and hemlocks,
played ball among the apples, rode horses
with us in the horse show ring and around Bass Lake,
climbed Flattop, Saddle and lookout tower,
drank from the spring below the Saddle;
Grandfather Mountain we clambered over,
ladders, Nose, Attic Window, and
roasted wienies on the Linville Peak.

Part 2

Ruddy copper oak leaf's
heraldic flame
in the deep gentian sky -

a lemon yellow butterfly breezes erratically 'er
gracious hydrangeas
nodding and bowing
deeply rose now -

Below cloud-ribbed satin sky,
like a shell, so small
because of woods all 'round us,

I lay, private
like a clam 'neath its pearly heaven.

Cold bright blue gold red October day,
come in with a shirtload of apples
cold hard juicy packed with mordant taste of the apple.
How is it firm with such liquid? -
Cool dewy nights with white moons
strengthen the apple.

Vera remember the cornmeal -
you cooked wonderful hot cornbread
in your eight by eight pan
for Irene and Wat that day we ran out of bread?
From that small square white paper bag
I made pancakes -I had no
syrup but made some, once from brown sugar,
once from a black cherry dessert mix,
both delicious on the cornmeal pancakes.

Vera remember that late August day the Orkins came to exterminate

Powder Post Beetles and fleas?

and both our houses plagued with this perfume,

we holed up in the Office with

the two cats Elmer and Willow?

and how the lights went out in that

most terrific thunderstorm in memory?

I ran to the gas stove in the other house

and coming back with a pan of boiling water made

us mugs of delicious herb tea.

Phyllis and Hutch and I went over the place

to the topmost campfire meadow,

choosing a garden site,

also through the Citadel, the Cabin

overgrown now with daisies and blackberries,

and the Main House,

discussing their preservation

and we went into the woods behind the Crafts Cottage

and rescued a pine over which a dead tree had fallen

till before the house our eyes grazing

the beauty about us as one strokes a cat

our eyes play among the upper apple trees,
turn down, maple, hydrangea, cherry,
up to the Citadel, then the lower orchard,
again and again,
like a landscape remembered from a dream.

It was a dramatic cloud-streaked sunset, the big pine
before the cottage picked out by light,
and later as we ate at Holley's
we watched the heavy cloud bars
settle above the majestic silhouette of Grandfather.

The place has your quaint charm and sweetness,
friendly, unpretentious, homey,
it says "How beautiful you are".

And now snow!
freakishly early - October 13, 16 -
snow on the apples, the hydrangeas
strange sight - but beautiful,
the gracious postures of the apples
bowing low as they offer their ruby treasure
all haloed by bright radiance of white.

I've cut my way up the hill.

Now I must topple the skyline goldenrod

loosely attached to eight foot stems

like big tassels

intensely yellow tops

velvet fit for kings' doublets

tall tassels tossing

graceful weed.

Blowing Rock, North Carolina