Black Oaks

Okay, not one can write a symphony, or a dictionary, or even a letter to an old friend, full of remembrance and comfort.

Not one can manage a single sound, though the blue jays carp and whistle all day in the branches, without the push of the wind.

But to tell the truth after a while I'm pale with longing for their thick bodies ruckled with lichen and you can't keep me from the woods, from the tonnage of their shoulders, and their shining green hair.

Today is a day like any other: twenty-four hours, a little sunshine, a little rain.

Listen, says ambition, nervously shifting her weight from one boot to another—why don't you get going?

For there I am, in the mossy shadows, under the trees.

And to tell the truth I don't want to let go of the wrists of idleness, I don't want to sell my life for money, I don't even want to come in out of the rain.
The Rapture

All summer
   I wandered the fields
       that were thickening
           every morning,

every rainfall,
   with weeds and blossoms,
       with the long loops
           of the shimmering, and the extravagant—

pale as flames they rose
   and fell back,
       replete and beautiful —
           that was all there was —

and I too
   once or twice, at least,
       felt myself rising,
           my boots

touching suddenly the tops of the weeds,
   the blue and silky air —
       listen,
           passion did it,

called me forth,
   addled me,
       stripped me clean
           then covered me with the cloth of happiness —

I think
   there is no other prize,
       only rapture the gleaming,
           rapture the illogical the weightless —

whether it be for the perfect shapeliness
   of something you love —
       like an old German song —
           or of someone —

or the dark floss of the earth itself,
   heavy and electric.
       At the edge of sweet sanity open
           such wild, blind wings.
It is midnight, or almost.
Out in the world the wind stretches
bundles back into itself like a hundred
bolts of lace then stretches again
flows itself over the windowsill and into the room
it scatters the papers from the desk
   it is in love with disorganization
now the manuscript is on the floor, and reshuffled
now the chapters have married each other
now the alphabet is lost
now the white curtains are tossing wing on wing
now the body of the wind snaps
it sniffs the closet it touches into the pockets of the coats
it touches the shells upon the shelves
it touches the tops of the books
it slides along the walls
now the lamplight wavers
as the body of the wind swings over the light
outside a million stars are burning
now the ocean calls to the wind
now the wind like water slips under the sash
into the yard the garden the long black sky
in my room after such disturbance I sit, smiling.
I pick up a pencil, I put it down, I pick it up again.
I am thinking of you.
I am always thinking of you.
At the Shore

This morning
wind that light-limbed dancer was all
over the sky while
ocean slapped up against
the shore’s black-beaked rocks
row after row of waves
humped and fringed and exactly
different from each other and
above them one white gull
whirled slant and fast then
dipped its wings turned
in a soft and descending decision its
leafy feet touched
pale water just beyond
breakage of waves it settled
shook itself opened
its spoony beak cranked
like a pump. Listen!

Here is the white and silky trumpet of nothing.
Here is the beautiful Nothing, body of happy,
meaningless fire, wildfire, shaking the heart.
Have You Ever Tired to Enter the Long Black Branches

Have you ever tried to enter the long black branches
of other lives—
tried to imagine what the crisp fringes, full of honey,
hanging
from the branches of the young locust trees, in early summer,
feel like?

Do you think this world is only an entertainment for you?

Never to enter the sea and notice how the water divides
with perfect courtesy, to let you in!
Never to lie down on the grass, as though you were the grass!
Never to leap to the air as you open your wings over
the dark acorn of your heart!

No wonder we hear, in your mournful voice, the complaint
that something is missing from your life!

Who can open the door who does not reach for the latch?
Who can travel the miles who does not put one foot
in front of the other, all attentive to what presents itself
continually?
Who will behold the inner chamber who has not observed
with admiration, even with rapture, the outer stone?

Well, there is time left—
fields everywhere invite you into them.

And who will care, who will chide you if you wander away
from wherever you are, to look for your soul?

Quickly, then, get up, put on your coat, leave your desk!
To put one's foot into the door of the grass, which is
the mystery, which is death as well as life, and
not be afraid!

To set one's foot in the door of death, and be overcome
with amazement!

To sit down in front of the weeds, and imagine
god the ten-fingered, sailing out of his house of straw,
nodding this way and that way, to the flowers of the
present hour,
to the song falling out of the mockingbird’s pink mouth,
to the tipples of the honeysuckle, that have opened
in the night.

To sit down, like a weed among weeds, and rustle in the wind!

Listen, are you breathing just a little, and calling it a life?

While the soul, after all, is only a window,
and the opening of the window no more difficult
than the wakening from a little sleep.

Only last week I went out among the thorns and said
to the wild roses:
deny me not,
but suffer my devotion.
Then, all afternoon, I sat among them. Maybe
I even heard a curl or two of music, damp and rouge-red,
 hurrying from their stubby buds, from their delicate watery bodies.

For how long will you continue to listen to those dark shouters,
cautions and prudence?

Fall in! Fall in!

A woman standing in the weeds.
A small boat flounders in the deep waves, and what’s coming next
is coming with its own heave and grace.

Meanwhile, once in a while, I have chanced, among the quick things,
upon the immutable.
What more could one ask?
And I would touch the faces of the daisies,
and I would bow down
to think about it.

That was then, which hasn’t ended yet.
Now the sun begins to swing down. Under the peach-light,
I cross the fields and the dunes, I follow the ocean's edge.

I climb. I backtrack.
I float.
I ramble my way home.