

failed haiku

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WHO LOVES?

[Somonka: lovers tanka exchange]

*Your letters deceive--
every syllable reveals
you won't return.
Seated at your polished desk,
whoever enters must bow.*

Such a fantasy!
no one bows down to me here.
How to convince you?
Must I lap milk from the bowl
of your kindness each day?

*I long for brushed lines
that subtly caress the page,
it's dotted with moonlight.
Today I saw white herons
doubled in calm reflections.*

This city offers
neither bird nor sunny lake.
I crouch in a room
without windows, overhear
pigeons cooing on gargoyles.

*And what do they say?
Do you imagine lovespeak
roosting two by two?
Squirrels are building a nest
in the crown of our maple.*

The computer hums
like a strict instructor
ordering fingers
to play musical keyboard,
a letter always missing.

*Remember the school
where we met as first graders?
Voices of children
shrill as whistling teakettles,
rumps slip-sliding down the chute!*

The seesaw asked for
two bodies alike in weight--
we weren't a match
and forgot each other's names.
Now yours is my mind's default.

*Computer jargon
as metaphor? Explain, please.
Song of the forties?
“I see your face before me....”
on billboards, night and day dreams?*

Echoing voices
conspiratorial hiss
a hum of whispers
breaths held on audiofile
a flashing funhouse mirror.

*A mother loon swims
with hatchling on her shoulder--
the bit of brown fluff
serene, blue lake accepted
as floor, blue sky as ceiling.*

Parental fealty
ah—infant’s Edenic trust
casements wide open
cherubic zephyrs at play
doors innocent of padlocks.

*Xylophone bell-notes
Lips blowing rosy bubbles
Conch shells inner satin
Caribbean turquoise tides
Why not conjure sweet-salt dreams?*

Now my telephone
interrupts like a jailer
time to do this/that/
clang! crash! burr in the eardrum!
lyrical thoughts? Forget it!

*Come back with me, then--
Let machines talk to machines.
When my body speaks
your phantom blood courses through—
heat and pulse and loss of self—*

yes, and gain! Kisses
articulate, words arouse
something within me
wild for the You questioning/
answering within my veins.

Charlotte Mandel