



LIVING DEATH

Robert Lewis

the woods and field  
are power-packed with life  
a splitting open of seed  
a gush of lusty fullness  
wet driving bursting musk  
the sweaty fuck of spring  
giving birth to deep hot  
summer

and summer lays around  
sultry and sleepy  
dreaming of spring  
lazy now  
full and pregnant  
waiting  
as little bugs  
build cities in tropical forests  
beneath my feet

and all the abandon of  
may comes full  
and gives way  
fat and swollen  
to autumn

the fiery land  
pours forth its juice  
ripe like a split peach  
dropping its pit  
and life is good

then life is dead  
gone underground  
withered old dry  
cold brown grey  
clattering  
in the ice blue sky

and every moment  
from spring to spring  
is haunted by the winter



without the winter  
there is no spring  
without death  
there is no life  
so we go on  
living death

living death  
is not killing life

the moon  
is always full  
and dark

stars shine  
in unknown places

we are here  
we are gone  
we are here

sowing  
for the sowing  
weeding  
for the weeding  
gathering  
for the gathering

living for the living  
dying for the dying

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sharpest blade  
sooner dulls

wild weeds  
are gardens  
tended by nothingness  
and so they endure

coming  
and  
going  
to be the and



blend away  
welcome to obscurity

no loss  
no gain  
no beginning  
no end  
no alpha  
no omega

living death  
is not killing life

ranging the wild forest  
i am rugged brave and new  
combing desert beaches  
i am old  
in the deepest valley jungles  
i am dead and left to rot  
on the oceans of the moon  
i am unborn

like a clean and pure  
silvery nothing  
trapped within a diamond  
in the ground  
i could be anything i want to be  
but what's the use in trying  
i am everywhere shackled  
nowhere bound



i am dead  
yet i live  
my own seasons  
come and go  
many years  
many more  
now you see me  
now you don't  
all the ages will not  
change me  
all the why and what  
and if  
nothing here can ever  
harm me  
i am dead  
and yet i live

little fantasies played  
in my head  
useless one acts  
with hypothetical plots

i walk in the garden  
barefoot  
under the full haze-laden moon  
it's four in the morning  
i'm not sleepy  
though i know sleep is needed  
but i think  
the night is my domain  
just as is the day  
perhaps i will sleep less  
and for short times  
getting up to roam  
the cornfields glittering in the fireflylight

then from beyond the fields  
and deep into the pastures  
near the pond  
comes  
a voice

it was a rare and dappled bird  
i imagine  
and what it said was not  
spoken to me  
but to the night  
to itself  
like me speaking to myself  
i thought he said  
wake up!  
here  
now

and the little fantasies playing  
in my head  
useless one acts



with hypothetical plots

went away

and there was then  
just me  
and the moon  
dancing

there is little comfort in this dawn  
little warmth  
as the cows are called in  
big dumb brutes shuffling  
meanly in the morning pasture  
the sweet silage pungent  
ferments in the trough  
the milk flows gushing  
into stainless steel tubs  
fingers numb nose runs  
cold and red  
the body strains  
and almost screams indignantly  
struggles against these  
simple tasks  
the sun is barely up  
and there is  
little comfort in this dawn  
little warmth  
except the hot breath  
of fresh milk  
the steamy piss  
sloshing in the gutter  
little comfort  
except to say  
this is mine  
i have done  
this  
and now for breakfast



and lacerated now  
and lashed to the wheel  
of this stormed house  
the distant wind is rising  
the one that comes in spring  
rising like a minor harmony  
to this cold winter night

the spring i like the best  
and next the fall  
these are the seasons that  
make the mind wander  
make the gut yearn  
for what is to come

a bitter tea  
reality

warm and sharp  
soft and strong

the aroma of fresh wind  
the taste of deep and dark

the mother night  
the morning bright

a bitter tea  
reality

what is needed here is  
nothing

the trouble is  
we've been led to believe  
that what is needed here is  
something

what is needed here is ,

and that's even  
a bit too much



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the reeds  
as feather chimes  
clattered in golden waves  
toward the ripple mud shallows  
where long foot crane  
dapped with his yellow bill  
snake  
slithered head up  
in to the wet  
like an s  
across to the near blades  
of water grass  
distant blue-purple shapes  
rumpled the horizon  
and there were clouds  
under winged creatures

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time does not exist here  
only the flow of life

no beginning no end  
just a continuing

moment to moment  
a blending of action

when the night comes  
the dawn is here  
when the day comes  
the night begins

when i woke up i got up

a clean cold sun  
broke over the trees

morning is the poem  
i could never write



i breathe in what is breathed out  
and there is balance

a handful of rich forest earth  
contains the remains  
of many seasons  
but the trees seem stenciled  
on the sky  
the stars painted on my eyes

a mindful of thick summer thought  
is germination  
of many reasons  
but the grass seems too rich  
to be real  
the cows cardboard in the field  
and yet  
i breathe in what is breathed out  
and there is balance

own little  
possess nothing

few objects  
more space

say nothing  
see everything

be nothing  
be everything

less mind  
more spirit

the knife does not split the apple  
the apple makes room for the knife

splitting wood is good  
he said  
tossing the logs off his truck  
like a madman

stacking wood is good  
i said  
slowly one at a time

stack fast split fast burn fast  
stack slow split slow burn slow

a fire begins in the seed  
and ends in the cleaning of the fireplace



when the blade of the ax  
and the butt of the log  
are one in the mind  
the wood splits in two  
without effort  
without force

when the ax and the body  
are one in the mind  
the wood is already split

only the swing is left to do

rain scattered black trees  
sweet milk coffee

the new woodpile settles in  
its new place



the diamond patterned texture  
stretches out before me  
and behind me  
a rumpled plane sometimes rich  
other times so stark

it is everchanging like the surface  
of raging oceans  
up and down  
so much the same  
always different

little valleys contain vast  
canyons and caverns all  
multicolored and dripping  
wet with primordial taints

sagged mountains never end  
at the top  
spreading out into smooth moon landscapes

my cornstalks are torn and pale  
frozen in newer snows  
they stand sideways scattered  
here and there  
only a reminder  
spring lingers  
with frostbit fingers  
sleeping deeply hidden  
and apparently dead  
but i see it there just behind  
that dead tree  
just beyond that layer of ice and snow  
little seeds are smiling in the womb  
ready

who can remain still until the moment of action?



eating a lemon is like  
eating life

that noisy bird over there  
unlikely means to speak to me

nor this spindly spider as he  
crawls on my sleeve

no intent on their part i'm sure  
but i hear  
i hear

no time no place  
but here and now



there is no poverty  
but the poverty of mind

there is no loss  
but the loss of spirit

strong as an oak  
yet soft as a rose  
we endure

the wind rages on the land  
yet my fabric is not touselled  
but unfluttered pressed and clean

the rain patters in the mud  
but i am dry