

Animal Vegetable Mineral

I died one time
and in the cleaning up I found a ticket
in the pocket of that old tan raincoat.
(The English one with the plaid inside
like most folks keep forever.) A soft and
wrinkled night-blue stub and, in there
with it, my glass of plum-red wine.

Admit One and on the back in tight small
type the basic code for fifty years.

A ticket for that movie screened on the pewter of the pond, watched
at ease with the wine and a muskrat. I'd seen it before in rear projection
from the bottom of the lake but that time it was green. Nighttime stars
or daytime clouds, whatever then we viewed it on the surface.

blue

red

I came and then I was to be,
so in my being I ate the last bushel of dry
red beans. Smooth and cool and sifting I ate
the beans but before I did I took off my skin
and scraped it clean like a long vanilla pod.

I hung the suit to dry by the breeze and with
dampened corn husks I sealed the seams.

Supple then I packed it full and embalmed by beans my body slumped
as all one weighty stuff. Snug along the crack beneath the walnut door
I laid it like a salamander to warm the draft, to cinder every whisper.

I went and dared I would, of course,
and thus I met a silver snake who told me
that he'd etched a nearby stretch of salt flats.
His pattern pleased him for how it grooved
with the Latin jazz in his soul. He liked to
see his work from above but didn't often
get the chance.

Proud of it he took me there to view the opus
and I was moved to scat along.

With two hands then I cupped the salt, a windswept acre's worth
of art and used it all to pack a fish for my journey. The only color
we could see was the brimful yellow of the six fresh lemons I imagined
to buy on the way.

yellow

black

I stayed and so I could, at last,
and wrote a shopping list for *pasta negra*
and soaked the paper overnight until all
the writing rendered to a jet-black ink.
I dried the ink on the back of a tortoise
and brushed the powder to a lacquer box
to sprinkle at my every favorite place.

The tortoise didn't mind a bit, pledging his
house as my house for as long as I might live.

Later I heard that the grocery words were popping up, reconstituted,
inciting riots at every salt marsh and bistro; at each gallery, cabin, forest
and farm stand. Blinded by bursts of garbled hunger, the people
begged and I agreed to mill their wheat for one year.

An owl in my looking glass.
A flask of diamond dust.
A gull wing in an aerie by the moon.

white