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RAIN FOR KA-WAIK

Out the back window the sky is dead. Rain
promises the garden its grave relief, its
promise buried in furrowed hearts

SHIWANNA

SHIWANNA

old footsteps echo on the southern hills.
To the west, over the village, the sky is bright

(Paitamo, set us at rest.)

Last night under the yellow light we moved
bright things, speaking of sleep, trying to renew
old firelight dreams. Like the old ones we sat
gathering fragments of long since broken hearts
(Bring tomorrow.)

Today the rain comes. It gleans
powers of light on a slant, releases
blossoms in the shape of pity and ancient grace
(Grandfather, give us yesterday.)

Rain today coming from the east. Tomorrow
from another hill, the Shiwanna will send again
a token for our hearts to drink,
a wakening.

—Paula Gunn Allen

RELATIONS

underside of a dead sperm-whale.
underside of the rocks of eternity.
underside of moons, cannibal-lovers of all the earths.
underside of knowing and care.
un-turned belly of rotting muses.
white, decaying fibers of mountains, up-turned.
underside of clouds.
underside of lakes.
underside of dead sperm-whales.
of dead poets, dead buffalo, dead coyotes, dead waters, dead ground,
where understanding hangs in the balance,
precariously. underside of the hanged man.
underside of the hermit.
underside of the fool.
underside of the sun. the moon. the star.
where wise-men look down from the tower
at the upturned belly of earth.
cántas encantadas, wondering, de la luna, del sol, del muerte,
de la vida
(forgotten and lost) where song is a one-time shot, where
pain and bearing in blood make the herbs of understanding bloom
on this once new earth that is dying once again:
the star of yesterday came this way, unseeing. Ignorant
of its own meaning, it went by, light of a corpse dead
fifty million light years ago or more, saying: I tasted this earth once,
and so I know. I speak, I pass, I will not believe, I will go.

—Paula Gunn Allen