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Disclosure

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DISCLOSURE

1

The poem that begins as a sound,
aiming for the center of your life,
takes all day to climb to the rooftop,
looking out over the land, a vacant lot at dusk
water trucks are spraying to keep
the dust, to keep arid
desires—a boy down the street, a major
American prize—under wraps. To breathe
such desires might narrow your focus.
You'd see yourself as an insect,
buzzing interminably between despair
and despair. Caravaggio
was an insect, airbrushing,
centuries before the airbrush was invented,
the metaphors of his life
onto canvases so perfectly distilled,
you wander museum rooms
grateful for the heads
that stand in your way. How
delightful the snakes of unwashed hair
twining down a young man's neck.
You could eat them. You could eat
the pale soiled blouse
on his girlfriend's body, which you could eat
for the moles on her shoulders and sores
on her legs. But this is just
a romantic idleness, the easy
escape into detailed, everyday,
meaningless ugliness. Now
you're getting scared. Now the stuff
you don't want to talk about
surfaces. You'd like
someone you could ask,

Is this ok? does it matter to anybody
besides the little jerk
in my chest who repeats
in a two-beat stroke
he knows the world and he knows
who has no place in it
beyond the imaginary. Friend,
come to me now. I'm ready to talk.

2

The poem that ought to know better thinks that it does,
informing you with a wink that the color of your pants this evening
has a history in Manhattan homosexual circles
of signaling you're ready for action. Flattered, despite
your practiced modesty, you begin to flirt
in this room of high tan walls and white leather couches,
a party at a friend of a friend's, though no one
interests you particularly. It's just that
the whole world has a decidedly sensuous aura now,
the air above the glass end-tables shimmering indefinably,
iridescent as the pale metal wings of insects
who've waited decades to emerge in such numbers, in veritable clouds,
their life-cycle in high mountain soil a ten-year burrowing
to the stratum where darkness is so complete
each dreams itself a solitary universe—all stories
begin with "I" and end in tears; then a ten-year journey
to the surface, the weary flight north a poignant awakening:
their fate is a shared fate after all!

As you undress, they surround you, fitting seamlessly
to your skin—you are luminous, a god—but nobody
notices, nobody cares your intentions
are no longer metaphorical. Take me, you want to say,
the room opening out around you, the room so suddenly vacant
you hear a sound at your temples, a sound
you can't quite place, a rhythmic, disabling emptiness
as involuntary as the color blue.

The poem that never finds its subject is sexiest.

You meet it on walks with your dog early in the morning, mist
kissing your cheeks.

It has a room that's not well kept, but the mild bodily odor
mixed with cooking smells, onions and allspice, caresses you
like fresh sheets.

You wrap them around you, suddenly naked, removing your clothes
took nothing, a slip of the imagination.

The bed has just the right firmness, but before you test it
in moral terms, you stretch your legs, feeling languorous,
the covers molding to your every hill and rivulet.

To walk all day like this over your own body! you're in heaven!

God sits just above and to the left, admiring your postures,
your saunter, all the many discoveries: fire from the loins
will warm you in winter; the wheel you fashion from the palm
of your hand, given time, given just the right downhill angle,
will roll across the continent, transforming raw materials
into factories, bullets and lipsticks as interchangeable
as bodily fluids at amusement park beaches.

And the litter washed up under the boardwalks?

How easily you gather school children to perform public projects.

They love the rubber gloves that protect them from germs.

Their teacher helps each write a letter to you, the new
Parks Commissioner, who finds their sentiments oddly
thrilling, the smear of inks on the little pages more
than you'd bargained for.

These must be hidden.

If your lover ever sees them, he won't know how to read them
the way you do.

The poem that runs underground as a river runs
takes the shape of horses galloping at midnight

or potatoes cooking, cut up, punch-drunk from
all the pressure, the lid firmly sealed

these past ten years in a manner that drains
your skin of pigment in the already-palest places—

at the crease of an armpit, or where the thigh
attaches to the trunk next to your scrotum,

the flesh transparent, your clothes no longer
a song your body's instrument plays

for the masses, each shirt and sock like shades
on windows into you. How you long

to draw them back. How you long to swim out
from under the gravities of arousal and family

you thought middle age would release you from.
Flying is all you can think of now. You dream

your are a Renaissance city hovering above
the actual, its reflection. You are Venice

but better, weightless, the incorruptible image
of Venice in the heavens. Those who come to you

pass right through you. The blues and ochres
of your waters and architectures are substanceless

as laughter. Now the people you love most
and absolute strangers—all are equals

who come to know you as effortlessly as
the very oxygen trapped in their blood.

The poem that speaks to God speaks in a grammar
 whose form is as incomprehensible as it is tangible,
 a grammar of membranes sheared from the muscles of a heart
 neither weary nor invigorated, simply present, in a present
 tense as transparent to someone in the past
 as someone in the future.

Dog is *potential*, if one so desires, and goes with blessings.
Tension begets, standing on a rocky hill, *evergreen*,
 which we recognize immediately as *song* in the service of
 nothing but itself.
 They go with blessings, the condition of blessing the only river
 on the continent.

If yellow poppies be the popular belief in corporate intractability;
 if pus stand in place of marble kitchen counters;
 if mastectomy assume the last-minute demeanor of a favorite seasoning
 whose fragrance sums up a life,
 take a breath, take a deeper breath, of this sound you've become.

for Matt Gabrielson