

Nicholas Knebel

on losing the ability to speak

the bath-tub water is turning steadily darker
and someone dives into the ocean in the morning yellow,
a world divided by a banana peel
on the race-track: a cockpit of empty steam
reflecting opaquely: as opalescent glass defies
the refraction from the fractures
of your moon; disassembled this world
before the moon broke apart.

with no counterpart to churn the waves
someone thinks to pull the drain

they do not.

click goes the light

Amenities shifting like spinal alignments
of the ocean, undulating up into neck from the baseboard of bed
into neurons morphing around eyes as sweeping
bathroom suites the size of houses abandon vision,
replaced with operating tables, a surgeon's gown, mask, gloves.

The side view from the penthouse window where we
made love, pressed against the glass, miniscule cracks in the
vertebrae, spider-webbing across the system before
system upheaval, early hues of morning light, pink
pills mixed with pastries on the nightstand transforms hazily to
darkness,
where am I?
"transfer to O.R. 4 approved. floor three" rings the muffled elevator voice,
like hearing things from
the inside of a shopping bag.

Pleas and restraints –
no, don't make me. I don't want to lose my
hair –
blood supply –
air – and,
forced down and gagging, the smell of
the sky turned to pure anesthesia coming down to blanket my
nose –
mouth – and,
layers upon layers of
fumes, nothing like your home-brewed tea
and sweaters in
wintertime, the saline is
too cold. The sunlight drops past
the horizon blurs into fog

count backwards from
ten:
nine
eig –
click,

goes the light

because I never learned the names of birds

wings like wine flutter in rustling of leaves
the hustle and bustle of the featherload, unloading truck
at the bay, dock rubber red: the thirring bird, bouncing,
the deep red snapping up herring
snapping up snappers with their
branches of feet, sound a
backdrop to Sunday mornings pancakes
and syrup drip on the palette snap
the willow, wax
belabors feathers of flying marshacks,
a yellow thing with bloated legs sliding up to its rump
flies down
before a drop: a trick of the light
as the old man on the rubber red dock plays a guitar tune of paper-clipped things,
dreams in spring
white birds with blue bellies with blue beaks blue
hearts
in the sky,
in the water

soaked through.

ascension

we'll play airplanes into the night
with bodies vehement
shaking / arms outstretched, arms rigid
arms: planks of wood while our bodies fly
light crashing into steam
flittering in from the hall where I stand steam

rising
and I'll stand here and try
to bottle your love into words like wine is
bottled poetry like love on lips
of wine on lips of light before: steam
rises, the water
overspills the
kettle / almost puts out the flames
below before

I can turn it off.

and our weight, our ambition, our struggle through the ocean turned smoke
to the place before here, snakes wrangled in bushes constricted
ever present in the fight against history
for survival

and for survival, we'll offer words soaked in paper, we'll offer our bodies in
the type of light when one lover turns on the lamp
light dim in the previously opaque room,

and lover slowly embraces lover
with arms longed to touch
light / to touch / light increases, shining, resplendent like
the distance of sunset when viewed from points of removal
with summertime drinks in lemonade pitchers on the patio while the lovers kiss
wrap themselves standing
near the bed until it cannot be deciphered where endings and beginnings start or finish
wrapped in the night,
our bodies fly.

cobwebs

in dreams, I scatter over roof tops
of my history, a slept-in-only-once hotel
on the outskirts of bustling London, the seismic force of urbanity kept at bay by
curtained windows, glass enveloped
in grey haze. Upon reentry to sleep, I fly back
across the ocean, to New York
where even at night noise permeates our lives. then, to escape to quiet,
I eventually fly West
to where I grew up in an old home in Wisconsin,
and by perching on the rooftop of the neighbor's house, ours is clearly visible / in the moonlight,
the bones of it all look tired, worn-down, rickety
as if a mouth had eaten candies wrapped in regret, then decided
to lick the well-worn siding bordering the field
to the right
weeds long overgrown, swaying in rhythm to a steady sibilance, pointing to
the gnarled tree
that has always signified home even more than
the building we called by that name
the tree, veined and bulbous, wormed with branches that point to the sky
offered freedom from
the grand clock that struck loudly every hour, even into the night,
the looming shadows and gothic halls.
I can see my younger self now hiding under the long wooden dining room table
the annual holiday party. the house no longer feels the same,
we may never have belonged there anyway – anyway,
years later, curtains drawn close for the final trick,
a disappearing act. slammed doors. words shouted in the night
but, dampened, please,
mustn't wake the children.