

Charles Borkhuis

from POINT OF NO RETURN

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one is curiously drawn
to ordinary objects that abruptly
capture one's attention
then withdraw
from their names
becoming something foreign

the comb's *hairy teeth*
sitting on the bathroom sink

the hammer's *head*
broken from its handle
that stares at me nameless
and detached from its use

the everyday *word*
repeated enough
breaks off from language
to reveal its naked *thingness*

the anonymous *face*
talking to itself in the mirror
that suddenly shivers me
to the quick

he knocked down another bourbon
and peeled the label off the bottle
remembering when he applied the heimlich
and saved his choking wife's life

*memories make me think I'm dead
how about you he said*

watching his teenage son shooting up
pixelated cops on screen

*men are falling like raindrops
like tears from the sky he said
does it make any difference to you
or are you indifferent to their suffering*

they're not real dad

*maybe nothing's real he said
maybe "now" never truly arrives
and the present is nothing
but a vibrating memory
inside the eye of a hurricane*

I'll drink to that his son said
and threw down a shot

murder of the real in broad daylight
 while watching the slow grill
 of burgers on the barbie
 countless copies roam the streets
 dour drunk indifferent or bonehead happy

replacement parts prosthetics makeovers
 so seamless we never know the difference
 after a while we've become them
 and there is no difference

one plays out one's part sensing
 there are millions of others waiting behind the scenes
 mimicking the same emotions turns of phrase

a laugh hanging in space
 a bullet in the head
 running parallel to a kiss multiple replicants
 in movies ads catalogues bestsellers blogs

breaking news
 a teenage boy screwed his father
 and murdered his mother or the reverse
 he said he couldn't remember the exact details
 or they didn't matter anymore

boredom it's a terrible thing
 sure everyone feels the breath of the void
 on their neck but who calls the void police

the detective disappears under the sleepy lid
 of a vagrant squatting in a pile of used tires
 and slips a missing .38 under his head

*wait a minute haven't I seen this before
 get used to it life is a replay of coming attractions*

as if you weren't playing a private dick
in a dream that keeps changing
plots and characters

but somehow somewhere
you remember being a real person
in another life
in which you left your family and wife
to roam the streets searching

for the mass murderer slash genius
who turned this world into a game
of chance and chaos
irony and indifference

only to start all over again
knowing no more
than you did before

wake up as another you
who can't remember what he did
when he wasn't himself

hold on
who's this you I've been talking to

you'd never kill anyone
it's not in you you tell yourself
unless you had to

unless you became someone else
with skin in the game

one thing leads to another until
you can't remember your lies anymore
so you invent new ones to cover up
the cover ups

loose ends squirming every which way
until you finally become
a third someone living in the between

only later to wonder who's wearing
these plain clothes this detective's head

how does one return from the dead
slip into some sleeper's shoes
and take a walk past familiar streets
with no idea of ever returning

someone's gotten away with murder
he said to himself in a recurring dream

how could it be I'm still here
in this counterfeit reality