

Robin Ray

I Could Pretend

I could pretend voices don't scar, memories
are dreams to defend. I could interrupt my
solitude at farmers' markets, spend every food
stamp on esoterica like chayote, seacoral,

red perilla, Okura cross daikons or purple
Romano beans. They might strengthen my
heart but I don't want to live forever. Suffer
inevitable memory loss, become the gherkin

I despise. Rather catch scents from glass petals.
Basmati rice, when boiled, a carnal pleasure.
Fried, a celebration of life like a full snifter
of Mesopotamian wine from the northern

Zagros mountains of Iran. I could pretend
I'm a fledgling colonist settled in my seaside
home with a baccalaureate in bullshit, but
I'm still me: recherché, negligent, dependent

on charity. Eleemosynary in the flesh.
Fisherman with an allergy to fish. What have
I become? What am I worth? A penny more
than thought? In the end does it matter?

Cinema by the Sea

Once, the marina's cinema on Maritime Road offered free passes. Art film poorly received. Folks trickled in like drips of paint escaping duct tape. Indonesian cigars? Allowed if you can afford them. Moscato? That, too. Bikini if you dared

though no one took that challenge. Rained a little. Random tip-tap beats on the sidewalk. Redundant in that part of town used to frequents sprays from cresting waves. Embedded wall speakers in turn of the century woodwork on full blast. Attention

garnering. Throbbing bass. Vibrated the sleeping cadavers of ghosts. More than shook them awake. Knocked an urn of Colombian dark to the freshly vacuumed lobby carpet. A scent like brazed fur rose from the stain. A genie from a rancid lamp.

An elderly usher who remembered when the theatre hosted vaudeville got to work on it right away. The auditorium filled. Manager smiled. A woman on high heels tripped in a darkened aisle. The silent projectionist laughed but slept well that night.

Sacrifice

Souls of common men
are not what I crave;
I'm ancient and can't be fooled
by tempered graces.
Lives of elysian serfs,
peasants and slaves
are crystals in my
étagère displayed.

Alas, my trophy dome empties,
the void must be claimed
by rulers you've hypnotized
to believe they're gods
who cannot fail
but can be despised
or deposed and maimed.

But who are you to put
dreams in dreamers' eyes?
Someone who knows
of another that must take a fall.
Be they chairmen or pharaohs,
axis or allies,
sacrifice for mankind.
I'll take one and all.