

Mark Fleckenstein

ACCIDENT (after Jack Gilbert)

Watching last nights' snow fall from the rear window
of a neighbor's car. White, and not the same white
that fell last night. The moon, sun and stars continuing
last nights' argument. The light uncluttered and graceful,
unlike the wind trying to move it.

THE PARTY OF THE FIRST PART

The sky, clouds, wind, temperature, barometric pressure, humidity - all of it too fuchsia. The boat left three years ago, taking the fog with it like a tablecloth. You were spoiling for a fight like a dizzy turtle. "Chicken salad, tuna salad, cheese straws, they had everything." The room, one step closer to another, paused. The wallpaper faded as the month ended. Our new neighbors, inexplicable visit extending velvet pillows like urgent *while you were out* messages from various European locales and Asia Minor. They were graciously inept, clubfoot transients *in situ*. Sleepwalkers or impatient insomniacs? The newspaper was late in arriving, desperately bereft of color. "I was stuck in English and four other languages." Another question for the authorities to consider. I left the porch light on, just in case. It didn't fool the moths

The pleasure of these quieter days: none of country rhetoric, vacuum salesman moonlighting as census takers, just routine, intimate questions. Whose turn is it to take out the garbage? When will this day end? If a train heads east at 4 a.m. going 60 miles an hour and another heads west at $71.3/8s$ miles an hour, how soon will you be leaving? That you're better looking a year later, and then again after ten is no surprise. The years spent in foreign currencies, that hill behind the other one, the photographs... I've gone back to bed in that same dirty light that constantly followed us spilling coffee as it went. It was after Labor Day. Whatever worries were more subdued like visits to a dilapidated circus and zoo. Not a white linen faux pas anywhere in sight. Ah, those memories overlap like shovel handles, lives meticulously fashioned

for different occasions: one for London, Santiago,
Addis Ababa, Monte Carlo, Tsiblisi, Istanbul,
Pocatello, Idaho. Two arms between radio
blasts from passing cars like a new coat
trying to make change. Neighbors are always two
sizes too small. The post office closed for the weekend
and still I've yet to find my casual persona.
But it's not the first time the party left the train
station, the hosts heaping counterfeit caviar
like small talk, innuendos, sensitive political
scuttlebutt and Hollywood insider news
onto everyone's plate. It was a day resembling
this one and Midwestern. Fourteen steps east
of the kitchen window, the ill-tuned piano,
and two pictures: one is blue, the other, of parakeets
and captioned *I was only joking. Please let me come home.*
Human nature is liked Greek architecture:
the usual weights and measures mean nothing.
It's chinese take-out, lipstick, history lacking
empty liquor bottles and swirling organ music.
Even money is light and unfettered,
like an egg chasing a chicken.
This is how to appreciate beauty.

Would you come here if your life were in flames?
To travel, to shop, set the table for a small miracle?
"We've grayed a little, but we're still recognizable.
Last time I had the board meeting; Kathy came
along and shopped her brains out. I didn't know
you were here." Between Tuesday, next week,
marvelous and unexpected beauty, is where
the door should be. We lacked nothing of consequence;
language, colloquial winks and nods, gestures,
fashionable attire, postcards marooned against
the wine glass, addressed and ready to roll.
You never return from where you've been.
It's that someone you hoped to know better.
The letters, their hand-cancelled postmarks
tell no tales. Not that it matters. Anonymous
buildings put on more directions, advertise

empty offices, clouds improvise monologues
in ambiguous accents and could use a closer shave.
Spring fell against our end of the world
amid a three week snowstorm, and promises of
the rebirth of romance. I caught you looking at me
without my head again. All afternoon the aroma
of burned coffee, bacon, broken china, and a debate
of pocket change economic theory ensued,
concluding with the perfect martini –
the vermouth staring through the gin
like sunlight piercing a piece of ice.

LAMENTATION (1st Version)

I can die now I just begun to live.

--Charles Olson,

Misery loves what's left out:
dirty glasses, an argument

over new drapes, how to
compose a friendship.

No one comes out alive,
unscarred, content.

There's knowing and the door
the water glass tried to open.

The moon, close enough
to imagine someone's touch,

still, and will never answer

LAMENTATION (2st Version)

Misery loves the torn white scraps
of shirt and gown, iridescent cloth,

left by the dead any night
after familial wandering.

Daylight misquotes their thinking

LAMENTATION (3rd Version)

At dawn he is still there, invisible, short of breath, mending his net
-- Charles Wright, from "Spider Crystal Ascension"

Daylight misquoting torn white scraps
and shirts left by the dead

after familial wanderings Night
upon night Knotted, frayed thinking.

An unnecessary failure of red thoughts.

WITTGENSTEIN

1.0

When you're twisting in the wind,
the landscape is an afterthought.

1.1

The question follows you around the room,
one more extra eye.

1.2

The heart is a syllogism; if $A=B$, and $B=C$, look.
He lives through his skin.

1.3

The history is impertinent, bones like birds.
"That's why I'm here, to tell people things."

1.4

A sliver's understanding the world.
The telephone is a shadow.

2.0

An empty room is almost possible.
Sleep has a body, soul and mute

2.1

because its voice is a screen.
Action is only peculiar, a bat's flight,

2.2

a butterfly speaking.

Being alive is chemically accidental.

3.0

Memory is a term of absence, like a mirror.

Poetry is thinking how to makes bones beautiful.

4.0

The hand I would offer cannot

also hold the nail it hammers