

John Kuligowski

Possibility

Jenny has turned a year older today, & still we move languorously through our stoned, risible lives.

I watch the pellucid water shift subtly,  
breathing a medium of fish  
when we step into the lake, & I think that

if the sky were waves, we would drown, each of us.

But the elements are fixed, somehow. A miracle  
of order. Messianic treetops rise into the air,  
& splash against what is invisible.

My eyes, taken blind by the tawny light  
of smeared convenience store  
shades flounder before the lake houses

near the Greene family home.

I can imagine having grown up here with you;  
having known you my entire life,  
and our being together

a matter of course rather than the chance  
encounter by which it is really defined.

Everything would be different.

We would not be here, celebrating with your friend  
her birthday.

We would be reaching the invisible. Sheer possibility,  
the trees perhaps speaking of us, rather than  
the other way around.

## These Payments

You see they've given me these pamphlets, & all  
is made well. Mornings I glimpse the duck egg

yolk of sun seep & slip, its edges dripping  
through the window, & then each afternoon

the same, but in a slightly different space. Winter  
means my days are circumscribed by more than

these legs gone rod-thin. Spring & summer are  
debts I cannot afford—

so explain the pamphlets, like those I saw years ago  
on the dash of my younger brother's

truck, about the dangers of gambling, when he filed  
for bankruptcy, lost his house. Will is long dead,

& my own payments I cannot afford. The woman  
who comes each morning sops up the sun

with her good humor, & she whispers to my wife  
perhaps it is best to put away what mirrors

she can. My image is smudged, my eyes those pits  
where Dad would throw the livestock carcasses,

those contagious dead. This woman who comes each  
morning revives me with half-recalled ablutions

after rolling away the stones, & suggests that the  
morphine-dream spiders I see are weaving

fine strands that hold together the Lord's plans.  
She forces me to arise, to arise and walk—

to walk before Phyllis who looks on with milky-eyed  
wonder at her hubby revenant, while holding back

her gag, when the smell of a future that is decidedly  
not mine to own comes calling for payment.  
Moving on Again

The house lies dappled in afternoon shadows,  
light blue and hidden like  
recalcitrant vein in arm crook.

The place is for rent again &  
I wonder who would fall for such a mirage of  
comforts,

or if anyone could. Maybe everyone  
who has ever lived there had no illusions.  
Actually, I *think* they had no illusions.

I hear doors opening & closing, mostly  
closing. The last neighbors were beyond  
the pale—funny, but I probably was them once.

I *know* that I was them once, but they  
are older now than I was younger, then.

The stairs lean into the porch like a freshly  
broken jaw that still groans of predawn  
connections. Architectural failures

following their mornings after. Across  
Hudson Street, an ambulance wails  
long through the croak and splutter of corrosive

half-forgotten epithets—  
and a butterfly drops to an abandoned vase of  
cheap artificial flowers on the old porch.

## Background Microwave Radiation

I watch the snow at the verge of the community  
garden fall diagonally along the trunk  
of a slender oak tree.

It comes down like static—  
like radio waves—  
& buries the earth, spattering  
against the bark, simulating  
the flocked down of *Norape ovina*.

Once, when I'd taken too much acid,  
I thought we're nothing more than  
fleshy transceptors.

I ran terrified out of a club, into  
a late-night grocery store,  
& spent a couple of hours staring  
at boxes of sugary cereal, wandering up & down  
the aisle, meditating upon Count Chocula  
& the furious whiteness of the Trix rabbit.

There was snow on the ground then, too.  
The earth was buried in radio waves.

Recently, I came to the conclusion  
that we are just flesh—nothing special—  
though with organic transceptors freely  
flowing through blood.

What I would like now  
is to learn everything I can about cosmic  
background microwave radiation  
& neurotransmitters,  
but I see to set foot, the snow is getting  
much too deep on walkways & in the drive.

## Stretch These Stirring Things

Tonight I am imagining a killer.  
He is strung-out on basaltic lunar maria,  
restless as acacia leaves  
dancing with green-backed June beetles.  
Together we get drunk on blood & the vesper,  
all the way from 1981, & I help  
to stalk another drowned world  
near the Golden State.

He will be gone in the dark,  
abandoned while I listen to the nightsounds  
stretch these stirring things over the highlands—  
It is but a matter of height and depth,  
that face, light & dark,  
the man in the moon a specter between  
the abyss of the seas  
& these ancient floodplains.

I wonder what it would be like to be hunted  
by him, then I try to wash the flavor  
of true-crime and popcorn from my mouth,  
yet specular violence & butter drip  
off the staircase, the doorframe,  
my flayed nerves.

Together: flesh on edge, awaiting victimhood.  
You say you won't go into  
the kitchen alone, for the shadows,  
& all the times I roamed through  
the witching hour,  
beneath bridges,  
outside the middleclass worlding  
of suburban homes—they speak back to me  
in conversation with stark, nightfall divisions

between their territories & mine.  
Serial exploits & lonelinesses.

To be glimpsed then  
as I must have been,  
I am that phantom figure with whom  
you would have associated fear.