

FOUR POEMS

by

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Hidden Man Beneath the Blue Room

I meant memory—how a moment cools in color
from a snippet of an ex lover’s laugh, the sudden familiarity

of sandalwood clung to a sleeve. On the surface of the canvas, a
woman—
paler, more pinched at the waist than me. Her hair is the correct shade
of yellow, mimetic of the art on the wall behind her.

She is bent over, standing in a basin, squeezing a sponge onto her
thigh,
dripping water onto tin. Droplets plink, a bell-song not dissimilar

to the laugh you try to forget. The rumpled bedspread.
If time were a ven diagram, our lives would have kissed: an instant,
simple. In 2008, they found a second

image beneath *The Blue Room*. A portrait of a sad man in fancy
clothes. Sudden familiarity—sweat mingled with crushed cloves,

breath seeped into a collar. A memory
exhaled. The identity of the man beneath
The Blue Room perplexes critics. His hand is folded at his cheek,
his lips stern. You are ambivalent. You suspect

Picasso was simply poor—recycling canvas. I meant I strain
to see you. Your feather-light memories, their pigments
suffuse. The lifted instep of a light-haired woman flickers
across your iris. I squint at you in passing.

How To Sleep Through Three Weekends in a Row

Placental, you are a wet one already. Fennel-layered, your light flutters. Let it. Nap tunnel—conundrum of rest, you get some and it's plenty, still, more sounds nice. Outside, violent light. The sun set against everything—sound drenched vines wild flinging against the red thrum of inside. You get some, still. Let yourself of focus—allow the holy, hard world to veer strange and double.

Language fades you, then fades on you. Every apt word hovers just out of reach.

Could feather. Your tether to lucidity goes fluid, loops you in wet. Everyone is in here and cheering. Scene veer, you are neither here nor. But your core group is in the dream—the walls all window, trip you into a cliff face a dinner party a binge into the whale-frothing ocean. A bridge over the ocean sickens through a crisp hillscape, pillar after pillar reels the road vertical, wheels in fealty—real as a right angle. Plain old ocean. Echo of every train station rains brick dust, kicks up a clock face that locks your eyes. “Three wishes or the wave form will tame you,” the time hisses, and you whisper back *love love love* and the clock's glass claps out light.

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Colors flood to your skin, fade, flood to your skin, fade.

Stale plenty, sheets creep into tangle. Sour-breath. Canon gasps from the nightstand, “How will you find me from under all those blankets?” Clean, clothes-wearing people beep your phone. Hold you this bed, bed holds still. The trembled day stays a wretched get. Tremulous with empty spaces. The stay in—where anyone's face might flutter through a dream.

Wake up shouts your name.

Cloud glug. Smoke rumbles up from under a treehouse. Specter flood—machetes limb-wreck. Flood of specters. Wretched get, shadows seep through slatted floorboards. Roar of no more safety—hooded lurchers flurry the whole horizon. Eyes pried out and tacked to maps. Black slugs suck at your calves and ankles. Blurred vision—the world is over. It lisps continually dimmer.

Failed to fill, heart gargles, the howl of outerspace between glugs. Mayday—lay down and stay.

Leaving sleep is a creak together of consciousness—wake in a dream, wake in a dream, stave off waking by waking within sleep. And as the dream fades, finally, self solidifies as a pendulum, swinging from the sky.

[acts of service]

Frosting locksmith, I'll clock you
in at midnight. Whip me

up some thunder, or failing
that, some dust. Settle

the rasp of undone chores
into a mute future—a bottom

defined by its cliffs. Rouse a drought
while I draw a bath, to relax after

a protracted anthropocene—a drawn
out arousal of synthetic weather,

so that when rock mourns a long
gone ocean, whale song will ruffle

into the lowing of oxen. You'd off them
for me, hush their songs, fossilize

every plaudit about becoming
what we wish of others. If I become

lost among rock spires, set down crumbs
enough to guide me out—or, failing an exit, toss

my sweets into an ad-hoc witch-hovel,
slick the corners closed with spit

& sugar. You could ask me in to sit
and nibble. You could stay busy for me.

Orb Weaver
for Marianne Moore

The structural variations of orb webs
number amply into the hundreds: sheet webs,
spring traps, spirals, snares.

In the West, we habitually locate
the center of our selfhood, our agency,
just behind our eyes.

Glands in the spider's abdomen make liquid
silk. Each gland leads to a tiny spigot, known
as a spinneret.

In the East, people locate their agency
at the chest's center: gestures to the sternum
implicate the mind.

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Frame threads anchor and delineate the web.
Radial threads converge on a central hub.
Neither are sticky.

As an idea transmits from one person
to another, humans struggle to locate
that notion in space.

Spiders make the catching spiral adhesive
by regularly studding strands with droplets
of glue. Where two threads

intersect, they form a solid connection.
Entomologists still debate if these points
of contact enact

a genuine fusion of threads, or if some
other substance cements them together. When
the spider prepares

to create a new web she must eat the old.
I read the letters Bishop wrote to Lowell
to settle the buzz

stuck in my mind. *Art just isn't worth that much*,
she wrote. A spider's web extends beyond her
body. She might wait

at the web's center, or might build a retreat,
removed from the web
waiting for contact.