

Dobby Gibson

Recidivism

Best to remember that aside from the moon,
 so much is already decided, cleaved and planed
 beneath long ago's glacier.
 Summer must finish its weary skiffle,
 the avenue's flickered light can only gather in the leaves.
 We have no say in the evening's drunken tincture,
 or in the hiss of this beer's fizzle.
 There are only tiny choices: when to slake thirst,
 how the lips might part a mug's foam,
 what to think about the way you once brushed
 her cheek with yours so you both flushed,
 if only slightly. Ignore the murmur of voices
 from adjacent bedrooms as they rise like memory's vapor.
 For now, unzip your partite, sarcous self
 and tune the radio, swig dry sherry behind the wheel.
 Drive past the factory that smells of melted
 candy as those around you rapidly merge.
 Soon you may crave a long danish in Eau Claire,
 eventually you may crave Eau Claire from Denmark.
 To understand the heart,
 you must first move away from home and then back
 as you carefully mimic the blood.
 Most bumperstickers will translate as *I'm better than you*,
 all graffitti as *I did this*, which, in you own way, you did.
 In an upstairs shower, two are slickened, tangled and groping.
 Through the floorboards a voice says *trust*
 as ice snaps in a glass, though it may have been *lust*.
 If only it weren't so difficult after the hello,
 the words as difficult to grasp and hold as fish shadows.
 The Danish have 27 ways to say *pastry*
 yet your never managed *love*.

Now the other selves waft through their apartments
while the tree buds snap, everywhere the sound of bones
as they knit, blood as it clots. Everywhere are squirrels
who swallow, swallows who can't, fish without eyelids.
What kind of way is that to go through life,
trapped inside death's muddled stare?
Naked ankles once waded in the deep end
and it was only a matter of when to reach for her lips,
but also when you'd be handed your knapsack
on some morning's stoop. If it's not want, it's hope,
which often leaves us fumbling
in prayer behind the wheel of a Datsun,
trying to piece together one severed fabric or another.
Soon you'll return to the apartments and their small verdicts,
the flutter and insistence of some windsock,
the overhead gunshot of shoes across linoleum floors.
The lobby's escalator as it rises only slightly toward the heavens.
And the side to the escalator few ever see:
the steps as they fold into themselves,
as they return to do it over again.