

Erica Hunt

STARTING WITH A

She passes through pockets of warm air in a cold season,
assailed by night noises, sounds in a correspondence
based more on bravura than the contents of this failing world.

Start with A as in ANT, and give to every terror a soothing name.

Death is a white boy backing out a lawnmower from the garage,
staring down the black girl's hello,
silently reentering the cool shell of his house.

Is it an accident?
She is working without quotes, never looking down.

The sunlight thickens at the end of the day bringing the edges off
things nearer,
sharp laughs that break the honeyed silences.

In night country all routes are approximately marked.
There the exact temperature of the prison can be felt,
the degrees distancing "home" from its public relations and denial,
at night the shortest moments rustle in their chains;
the invisible blends in.

ECSTASY

What have we to look forward to but old age
an unfolding of the flesh into some foreign package
whose stamps we barely recognize
whose worries are like lint we pick up from nowhere
the scar of it from no accident we can recall
but obtained in the dark, in the dark
theater we embrace a faded script.

I can't explain it. I looked up from the page and found myself fully grown. It lasted for about an hour.

Here's my strength—to follow the meaning
even as it stands zig zag along the sheer edges
of sight; the brittle garlands of thought
jagged tooth scaling the horizon.

Noted for my level head
even among these unfinished songs.
Instead of planning beauty, I, as they say,
“let it happen.” Let eyes connect the dots.
Air connive with the invisible.

Ecstasy is blind and moves on wings, torn feathers.

CITY OF HEAVEN

I take pains to letter the streets. Grid made rigorous in all directions. Sky locked. Exits clearly marked. Lines ruled. Feet pointing right way, never up. Streets crossed. Traffic light. Statues armed or at least labelled. Populace populous. Decorous youth prowling in grief stricken black. Middle aged adults utterly filled to the brim and thus of no use to anyone. Floorwalkers guarded. Streetwalkers spectacular. Police menacing or impossible to find. Parks geometric and park walkers exponential rise as the day's heat peaks at full noon. Radios rocket. Managers on ladders fight their descent on the food chain. Everyone else cut off, cut out to fit or lose.

In the long run, there is no such thing as balance. You are all the way in or you are out of bounds. There is no way to extinguish this dialectic except through draft after draft of textual ethics, the mechanics and clanking machinery of reader focussed phonetics. I feel transparent. As fast as light. Paradise, where there are innumerable backdoors, and nothing to be afraid of. Nothing broken. Nothing fixed about it. Clarity in a blink of an eye.