

John Ashbery

MORE HOCKETING

The fear was that they would not come.
The sea is getting rougher.
There is a different language singing from the wall.
No singing from the wall.

The fear was that they would come.
Here, have one of these.
Have this one. No, have this one.
To have followed an adage
almost from the beginning of life, through
suburban pleats and undergrowth shrugged
off like underwear on a dinner plate.

Then to emerge fast
into where it's taken you:

No more figs, pretzels. Breakfast's
run out of steam.

And the last car has left.
Let those who never denatured another's remark
swim in wit now. Let the curtains fall
where they may. They are only in distress today.

We have further inversions, like father
and his children sewed up for a day.
Like the feathers you enjoy, the mail
you enjoy receiving.

You have successfully undermined the mountain that threatens us.
Now, panthers prowl the streets.

I took a streetcar that turned into a bus toward the end.
God rewarded me with chirping yellow fuzzballs.

I intended a sonnet that turned out a letter
when Rose crossed the road with her nose
and her father is doing better.

I always like it when somebody explodes out of a bush
to congratulate me on my recent success
for which I'm only partly responsible:
The siblings helped, they prevented it from melting
so high among the Alps you'd have thought it stayed frozen
always. Apparently not. Now we might have a riot
if everybody would calm down for a second.

A shadow-person conducted me along a road
to a little house where I was fed and absconded
with the clock on the wall. I told them I was mortal
and they seemed to let me go. Yet no one heard me.
I was as dust one takes a glove to,
a white one, then tosses in disgust, leaving it lie
in all the trickling creases you absorbed
in childhood, loving it. Two doors went away.

We were alone at last, as they say.
These winters can button you up.
They say Canada geese mate for life, or
till one of them dies, whichever is shorter.