

POEMS FOR THE PEOPLE

I am listening to the poet speak
I should be listening to the poetry, that is
Why I am adorned
With the studs of the domestic
Testing the strength of the blade, each line, to catch
Each line as it falls
Across the handsome of my neck
Each is sharp, not even a question

I am sitting quietly in a glass chamber, looking out
At the weather—people walking worn plates of the desert—mud
And green water inside the haze, mud and green water's flags
Flapping the vulture district. I expect
To see the people later, strewn through the streets
Kindling for the bonfire. I am getting hungry
Thinking of their bodies, I shall order double of everything

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I am listening to the poet speak
I should feel confident that I am listening to poetry
Without being consoled from the loss of the moment
The human inside what comprises the gel of the moment
Listening to the poet at the precise time of day
When the object of intense listening
Is mistaken for brooding. Everything is a waste
Long after the poem has been reared, I feel sick
Long after the poem has been recited
I feel a biological sickness
As a stay against falling away with the vacuum
Blowing through me—the poet
Saying one of two things—what has already been said
Or nothing at all—what has already been said

I remember the painter
I met in the desert—the painter
Painted a single painting
Of a single bird
Lighting over a single glade of dead water
And thus was anointed a painter—dead water edged out of protracting an
album
Of mystifying lifelessness
The painter loved
More than the glade of death water
Or the bird—even more
Than the dead—chaotic sex representations

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The glade thrust a single bird from the dark
For the painter to cheat on himself with, each stroke
Carrying the faithful object of his infidelity forward
As a poem left alone to its chore
Gasping out of an elderly head
Burst over a delicate sea of conceivers

The painter knows the poet loves women
And other poets first—not the painter or painters
Clinging tightly to the aspirin
Overhanging the gasping rosettes spiraling out of an elderly head
Coarse hairs of a brush, wet hairs
On a neck. When a child
Lies down to die, it is known
By the form of light upon the dying child's skin
Four days before the smell becomes a stench, six to become absolutely superb