

Elton Glaser

Q&A

Why must the beautiful always be
Higher than I can afford? And why must
The homely, the humble, the near at hand,
Seem so useful and good, strong enough
To open a can of beans but not the heart?
Why can't I drive into a wall
Some half-naked woman by Matisse,
Instead of this bargain from the parking lot,
Elvis on velvet, twelve ninety-five?
Why must all the Marthas of this world,
Who keep the toilets clean and make
The best meatloaf this side of the moon,
Shuffle around each morning like mops,
Pushing the hair from their damp faces?

Who knows what these questions mean?
Not me, a fool who majored in the dark
Slide shows of art. I should have been
Weaseling my way to a long degree
In economics, a science so dull that
Presidents surrender to its sleepy sentences,
To the pie-eyed arcana of the charts.
I should have spent my manhood
Less intent on condoms than conundrums,
A bachelor of philosophy, breaking down
The logic of the childproof lighter,
Filling my Mr. Coffee with midnight oil,
Happy that everything irrational
Must bend to the brain, and that
All the starlets of Hollywood, stacked
End to end, would never be seduced
By the least proposition of the Greeks.

Why must I always have my joke
And not enjoy it, too serious for tears,
Now when we need more winsome wounds?
And then, like a wildcat strike
From the night shift of the mind,
The answer comes: Hard work
Has no time for lipstick and high heels;
And beauty, even racked on a canvas,
Even slobbered with paint and hung
By the neck from a tenpenny nail—
Beauty has no use for you.