

the theatre once a month,
a Day Sailor harbored in the Cove,
the best scotch. Then he paused,
wiped his mouth with his hand,
leaned back in his chair. He ordered
another drink and toasted
my new family, my new book,
continued success! . . . *Ireland*,
he leaned in and whispered,
that's where I breathed
easy . . . His grandfather lifting a colt
at eighty, sneaking shots in the
shadows of the feed room . . . He went on
from there in a small voice
and good, I thought, it's
good to hear, to see a man *speak*
in the lean heart of the business
day. The waitress brought our check
on a black tray with two foil-
wrapped mints. Grady opened one
with small pale hands and chewed
as he continued—
he was back at the sea, trying
to explain precisely how it felt
to approach the port of Oslo in May,
seventeen years old, not even the need
to shave yet every morning

BEAUTY AND THE SPIDER

Once women were the beginning and the end of it,
and why a man would rather paint than touch
such skin beyond me. This lasted much too long,
and with luck will continue. At least, the idea.

The beauty of children is beauty's illustration
of its constant hunger for new forms, new bodies—
condensation rising from a rail fence at dawn
as if the solid world were melting, as it is.

Every fall is beautiful! The sound of stiff
dry leaves skittering down the roof at the wind's
brusque urging; high thin sheet of cloud,
blues and whites shifting like tropical waters.

October. A spider has dropped a line to my hair.
I am connected to her tiny cave in the tree
by a long shining strand. Always eager to be bitten,
I turn my head slightly, and both worlds tremble.

ON A BAD PAINTING IN THE LOBBY OF IBM INTERNATIONAL

The sly artist knew what he was doing—
all color and abstraction, no obsessive
rage. I sit with my red leather notebook
on my knee, waiting to enter the maze
of partitions, to sit and calmly answer
charges of substandard service, leveled
by a blond manager with a gorgeous tie
and bright future. I will not defend
the sad imbecilities of my employees
but tack the blame on money, how slim
the margin of profit, how you get
what you pay for, etc, and he'll come back
with original agreements, the contract
is quite explicit on this point, etc,
and we'll shake hands and I'll leave
carrying the implied threat of his smile
and a list of changes in personnel.
This is only the pattern of little whips
I get paid for (same as how many million