

All The Women Dancing

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Toutes les femmes dansant

Ce poème en prose tente de faire apparaître "l'essentiel" en chacun, chacune: la musique que l'on porte en soi, la façon dont notre corps bouge... Dans ces échanges sans paroles, une demande extravagante: "l'amour." Le réel (où ce que nous prenons pour tel: le bar, les rues) nous coupe, nous met en éclats (le verre brisé) parce qu'il danse au rythme de la violence.

Don't give me that.

push past the cracked
pane of glass and walk
right up to the bar.
don't hesitate to squeeze
between bar stools,
keep pressing til you have
smooth wood under your hands,
a cocktail napkin
between your fingers.
there'll be voices
coming at you – a woman
will tug at your sleeve,
a man will bellow in your ear.
don't get pushed back. this
is a bar. listen.

*He was seventeen
and the dimple was lopsided.
Not up and down – you know,
Paul Newman? – on an angle.
Left to right, right to left,*

*I don't remember. Pass me your lighter.
Anyway, I said to him, "Forget it
baby. You can't come in here again."*

listen. because you can't
see anything
except the high glass
and carved wood of the bar,
liquor bottles lined up
like a mystery.
what will the gin say.
what will come in the
course of the evening.

and you remember a woman once fell
off her bicycle as she was
riding by. she said she was listening
to the music. the bicycle wheel
revolved, slowly ticking.
a line of cloud across the moon.
then a guy smashed his hand
on the glass paned door
when she wouldn't dance.

*And she said
to me, "That's what I think
of you. That's what I think."*

the music comes from the
speakers, just guitar
and drums, no voice.
a long legged man
extends the mike stands
in the back corner, spot lit.

*She'll take my money, split it,
like loaves, right? Split it hundreds
of ways between the kids and her
and her mom. Nothing's coming
back to me, that's for sure.
Don't kid yourself. They do it*

*for money. They always get
what they want.*

and down the street the flashing
neon nipples above the
sidewalk, men against store
windows. an open door with
red velvet walls dim inside,
a sparkly lined showcase of
photos. car horns in the street
and the women in dressing
rooms, waiting to strip, waiting
to eat. the flip of a hand
toward an ashtray, glass falling
in shards on a stage, their skin
dancing, eyes on the wall.

*I don't think about it, usually.
I'd get too upset.*

the singer steps out of the men's room
wearing a powder blue suit
with torn lapels. his shirt strains
over his belly, and a wispy
pointed red beard draws his mouth
down to a sneer.

he squints in the light.

Guitar. swings the strap
over his head and settles
the guitar across his chest.

*O.K. folks, start
your drinking doubles
and feeling single. Boys,
lets talk.*

and he flashes his hand
down to the guitar and rolls
across a chord with the pitch
of the drums behind,
then leans into the sound

with the long legged man
on the bass beside him.

his mouth twists
words across the dance floor.
Baby don't you go.
the bass line rises
through your shoes and that guitar
cuts a line, it seems, from ear
to ear. all the women dancing
lift their heads, listen
to their bodies move.

listen. the sound is in
your head, it's in your glass
as you raise it and drain
the last of the gin.
it's in the rocking of bodies
on either side of you. she pushes
you, he pulls you back. this press
to the bar, gin flushing you –
you're hearing hurt, the
pain of leaving, being
left. his words and the crowd's
silent keening, twisting
by the wall. a man pulls
your hand, grabs your ass,
demands you dance with him.
his mouth splits when you
refuse, spits *Queer* and your
fury rises, glass smashes
on the wooden bar
and the guitar sound leaps
to the ceiling.

all the women dancing, listen.
Baby, don't you go, 'cause
I love you so. and a few
men stop and listen too.