

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Beth Ruscio: Three Poems

Beth Ruscio · Wednesday, March 17th, 2021

Nameless In Paris

Off the steel lace of Eiffel
I launch myself
and it's just a matter of angle, this flying,

levitating really, without strain
and next to me on the night he's died,
Marlon Brando flies too,

right through French doors,
cups his hand over my mouth,
his face within my bite

No names here. Not...one...name—
Brando
when beautiful

was a weary thug. I'm dreaming
in cinema, again, which is all I know
of Paris and I'm sick to death

of gravity, the ache I feel
where wings should be. I want
to slough off the places

where I'm known,
the many rooms of my renown,
summer picnics where I lugged

a heavy coat, dipped not one toe
in the water and woke up tethered
to a map. Never lost my way going home.

Let me slip back into a bathwater night
in this city of flight. Let my body pour out easy
following the river I've heard

runs through Paris. Weightless.
Aloft. Anonymous at last
among the French stars.

*

Part Of A Lifetime

Mom needs potassium. *Bananas*, I say,
then her line, *It's true*, and there we are again,

in a vaudeville routine. She smells like a perfume
that's gone off, and her timing's

shot. *I did a heart attack on Seventh Heaven. Wanna see?*
Take it easy, drawls the intake nurse.

In the morning, she phones Dad on her hospital orange juice can,
Honey, good news—overnight, I learned Japanese!

Doctor Snows prescribes Dilantin, stat,
the tall world, flat, that's what Mom needs.

By the matinee, she's down to two words:
Another Coincidence.

The next day,
she's a silent movie.

On the third day of her hospital engagement, like champagne uncorked,
Mom talks for fourteen hours, no intermission, speaking on the inhale

to hold the floor, her clattering hands, *I've always wanted to be ambivalent*
she crows, careening in grand loop-de-loops of tirade—

she is Lucky, WAITING FOR GODOT, *Qua Qua Qua*, and all day
as the meal trays pile up, and the sun changes shifts with the moon,

I watch her scale this huge monologue,
the biggest part she's ever had, persevering

even after she's lost her audience, all
save me, standing by, I know

to go on for her.

*

The Geometry of Watching

Plant your feet in the night.

Hands in your pockets.

Triangulate those elbows.

Tense up the hypotenuse of each arm.

Finger on the trigger of a gun in every pocket.

Misters One, Two, Three and Four: stand in front
halfway between a huddle and a posse

a pie slice away
from parallel.

And one of you,
Mister Five,
can lag behind.

Just that space

and we'll know you're suspicious.

Out of frame,
the light source is set to stun you
full in the face

as the horizon cuts you off at the knees.

It's working now, guys.
Look at the light directly.
Give us your longest shadows.

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