

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Hugo dos Santos: Two Poems

Hugo dos Santos · Saturday, October 25th, 2025

*These poems are from the upcoming collection, **Reduction in Force** (Bauhan Publishing, 2026), winner of the May Sarter New Hampshire Poetry Prize.*

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Control

More interviews and I play the part
though beneath my skin there are only
hollowed out caves following deeper
and in loops.

To be in final interviews that aren't final,
to pick up the same conversations
again, at different times, in
different processes for
different companies.

In between the interviews I apply to yet more jobs
and catalog my documents in
a spreadsheet so ornately architected
I could submit it as its own work sample.

Then more interviews and I am a blank gaze,
a piece of clothing strewn on the floor
and unable to give itself shape.

More interviews and my circle marvels
because I have so many and
they're constant

though even when they're good
it's a different me now.

I mean, whose interviewed voice is this describing

the professional experiences I have lived?

I am a ghost, pretending to be myself.
There is no substance here.

I cannot usher forth any excellence
in myself. All the amazing things
I did in previous jobs—where are they
now? Were they even real?

I am not in control here.
And there is nothing I can do to prove
I am enough.

*

Dress for the job you want

Still, these
humid summer
days, I wear
a collared shirt

to sit in
the basement,
observe something
resembling

schedule, which
might be just a habit,
something not unlike
superstition.

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