

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Nicole Tallman: Four Poems

Nicole Tallman · Wednesday, August 9th, 2023

The Velvet Room

In fifth grade, I carried a grape
Scratch & Sniff Sticker in my pants pocket
wherever I went.

I also carried a copy of a heavy,
faded book the school librarian
reserved especially for me.

Mrs. Woodruff reminded me
of a mouse being chased
by an owl.

Someone said something
about her living
with another woman.

We weren't supposed
to speak of it,
although no one ever told me that directly.

My sticker
became my bookmark.
By winter, my book smelled like an old vineyard.

Even now, if I close my eyes,
the curtained room
velvets and purples.

*

Tulips

— *After Sylvia Plath*

The tulips are too excitable, it is summer here.

Look how yellow everything is, how loud, how sunned-in.
 I am trying peacefulness, lying by the pool quietly
 As the light stares at these concrete walls, this float, this face.
 I am somebody; I have everything to do with implosions.
 I have given my name and my night-clothes up to my work.
 Nobody watched me before, but now I am watched and recorded.
 The tulips have turned me in, from the window beside me
 Where once a day their lens slowly widens and slowly zooms in,
 And I see myself, exaggerated in the papers and on the screens
 Between the eye of the public and the eyes of the seen,
 And I have only a cartoon face, I have effaced my real self.
 Before the fame the day was quiet enough,
 Then the tulips filled it up like an explosion.
 Now the air blares and flares around me the way a trumpet
 Blares and flares around its bright-yellow bell like a bee.

*

Dolce Vita

I finish *The Lover* and we walk
 to the new food court that just opened.
 The sunset sends us
 to the other side of the street.
 We pass by a building with a balcony
 bleeding bougainvillea.
 The old city peeks through the reconstruction—
 an ad for perfume, leather, a liquor long ago expired.
 People pack the lobby like vultures on a deer carcass.
 A girl takes a selfie next to the bar in the center.
 Everything is silver, blue, and glass.
 The smell of roasted tomatoes leads us to Cichetti.
 We order prosecco and tapas served on small wooden plates.
 I like watching the man at the oven who makes our food.
 How he moves like pleasure is his only concern.

*

Morning Storm

The morning begins with a storm.
 The thunder is so loud all the birds forget to sing.
 I wake slowly and walk to the window.
 The sky is black like a canon starting a war.
 I open the balcony and take in the air.
 A bolt of lightning stains everything yellow.
 The dog cries as the sky roars again like a lion.
 I turn on the fireplace.
 It's fake, but there is comfort in the plastic wood

turning orange.

I light a candle that smells like firewood
and blow the match out.

I stay in bed all day and eat strawberries.

I re-read *The Lover* in French in my pajamas.

I have never felt so close to you.



Something Kindred by Nicole Tallman

Purchase *Something Kindred* by Nicole Tallman

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