

THE ROOM IN 24 HOURS

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AFTERNOON

Dedicated to Miriam Mercedes Rössig.

She holds back her passion
For the leather book of poems in her hand;
He is playing the indifferent,
Through smoke of cigarette - a stolen gaze.
Stiff characters in the deadlock of an evening play.

Still a page, still a light,
The motion - so absurd, so uptight
With sterile stupor etiquette
Just a slipped diversion - and they both turn red.

She dies with the heroes
That act their lives between the lines,
She'll shed another tear
On a paper drama in a paper cry;
And he'll be the perfect man, all but sure of himself.

Tiny talk, eloquent
The rules - all observed, both pretend:
All words fall dead upon the floor,
Unheard and unsaid, both reach for the door.

San Angelo, November 1994

EVENING

Evening, door-bell, entrance
She's ready to go out
He's rather talk, so in they go
As night for fun turns awkward conversation
He'd rather talk, she'd rather go
But in they stay.
He knows the answers,
She'd rather hear not the questions
She wears her nightdress
Uncomfortably perched at the edge of the chair
He talks in hopeful desperation:
Before a firing squad,
Blind-folded, praying for a miss
Resigned to steel tearing through his flesh.
She listens,
Her grey eyes say she'd rather not,
He carries on, monotonous soliloquy,
Nothing like the passion he rehearsed.
He's tired, his sentences are tired
She listens mercifully, tries to frame the answer
He'd rather hear not.
Her silence speaks in thousand words:
He talks to change the way of stars.
She sighs and draws him near,
Hugs him closely to her breast.
He cries, she lets him cry,
She strokes his hair.
Grey eyes stare into the distance,
She does not see and is not looking,
Her grey eyes are sad.
He cries, she lets him cry.
Her ruined dress,
their ruined evening,
his ruined life.

Balchik, Aug-21-99

NIGHT

They converse,
or, I should say, he talks to ward off silence
she stares at the wall:
two empty feet between them,
his words arrive from miles away,
already weak, exhausted, strained,
she does not understand but listens on
of courtesy:
she does not want to hurt a stranger.
She's trying to recall the features
of a face she knew,
or thought she knew,
he's trying to remind her.
A wallpaper silhouette
with stains for eyes and crack for smile,
or maybe frown,
she knows the picture
in an objective way.
He stops weary of the effort,
he listens, or, I should say, he waits.
It's coming—powerless to stop it,
he bows his head—it is upon him now.
She smiles faintly,
she'd rather cry,
she smiles sadly,
she does not like to hurt the stranger
under familiar skin.

Rochester, Mar-02-01