
Marlana Portolano

Her Inspiration

An afterthought's refracted glimmer swims
To her, minnow-darting under reflections
Leaping patternless; the flames of rage pillage
Recurring dreams for Reason's sake. She breathes
To speak, to spurn the fire, to hum unease
And trembling fingers into lull and strokes
The stem before she takes the glass of wine
To waiting lips.

But now the hatchling fry
Of poems in vitro tickles where those songs
Of rage in plays unwritten writhed. She drinks
The inspiration in, and every draught
Is deeper than the last. Intoxicating sweetness!
Swift as fishes dart away in fear,
Those wriggling flecks of light, too small
To recognize, too swift to stop, dart
Deeper than daylight reaches. Something grows.

Monster of madness, creature of dreams repressed,
Or misty form of spirit, hidden artifice?
What waits, now that waiting lips are wet?

A Fateful Flight

with apologies to John Donne

Spiteful, greedy plane,
Tyrannic tin can,
Go pick on some gray-suited man
Or get lost in a black Bermuda rain,
Worthless metal scrap!
The nation's rat-trap,
Washington, D.C., is miles from his embrace;
Why hurl me towards that wretched, noisy place?
My wish will cause no newsworthy harm:
Let me quietly stay in my lover's arms.

Six long years,
A crash course in life
Equally weathered with jealous and shameful tears
And seasoned with storms of unending strife,
Have done what you
Yet unjustly do
By tearing me back to that urban exile.
Till I see him again, I will not smile,
But clench my teeth in a growl to meet the face
Of anyone who thinks he can take love's place.

I've learned enough!
Now take me back
To Texas, so he'll know that I'm no bluff.
Who cares for glory or bloody tenure-track?
To Eastern smut
I hiss, "So what?"
And endure, if I must, with monstrous Southern pride,
Till I can run, arms open, to his side.
The fondness and mystery of distance ain't much;
I want the real, not the imagined touch.