

And Then I Saw Andrew

Last night while walking in the dark,
not far because my ankle is still painful,
with an old fashioned restlessness
pushing forward with what I have done
and what if it were different, I realized
that what moves me has never been an urging toward faith
but pained affection, you pulling weeds in the front,
me trying on and off all day to get your attention,
our threads just slightly misaligned,
and then I saw Andrew at his kitchen sink, forehead
reflecting a dull fluorescent glow
and could not explain the stab of tenderness,
the certainty on my lips I'd touched his bald spot
and that he felt it with pleasure, being alone.
Andrew, a man I've met but once at the mailbox
and whom I never think about
except when passing his deer-eaten shrubs
and chemical lawn, his small white house
with its front-facing satellite dish, and find myself
looking for him, wondering if he is in the back
and what he is doing, while recalling
his surprising friendliness that day— he'd been to Corn Hill,
had barbecue with friends. He has friends?
Somehow I thought I'd outgrown a habit of turning my head
towards windows as I pass, thirst, dryness requiring strangers,
their clothing, words, walk, mouth, glance
a devouring warmth in the chest— my mother dragging me away
from the woman in the check-out line with the blue spotted dress,
carrying a purse with tiny bullet feet—
and there it was again, striking me down in the grit
and personal inconvenience while walking up the driveway
past Chinese lanterns on our chair by the front door, blossoms
you left there for me to dry and plant so next summer I can see
orange lamps swinging, see them, perhaps, when music has fled
into the night's chorusing at the end of August, after a day of loneliness.
Sweetness at the center of your gesture, tastes like gratitude
for being grateful to those I know and those I don't know,
those I love, and those I am indifferent towards, a gift
pressed into my hands by a quietly confident friend.

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