

MARCO...POLO...

47 lines

He will go find the others.
They will bring materials.
They will speak the code.
He will have money--- a little.
Wise counsel will be exchanged
and the nods--*they* know.
they *know* how it is.

They will talk trash
about those who didn't come,
then someone will remember
the one who died last year
and the air in the park will get colder.
They will hug in a whorled clump,
while incoming texts buzz and trill
in no particular rhythm
from this hip pocket then another
--ignored just this once---
while they hang onto the surge.

He could play father to half of them,
and lover to the really pretty girl,
— a happy skull tattoo above her ankle.
In the future he will make real money.
In the future he will shape every day
into an aspect of gratified desire.
He will own at least two houses
and in them will be many rooms
to appear and disappear from at will.
He studies the other girl's sleeve.
buttoned down to the wrist,
so he knows she's just cut again.
He feels his hands, his feet
then he doesn't feel them at all.

stanza break

Marco...Polo... continued

Back home his mother is sleeping.
Tomorrow she will protest wearily
over what exudes from his person, his clothes,
she will fret about his chances.
But now it's just after midnight
and tomorrow has only been alive for 7 minutes.
Tomorrow is way younger than he is.

One guy gets mad, then allows
the others to laugh him out of it,
they pass more stuff around.
The odd pinkish light of the street lamps
pierces the specks of rain
above their heads. The sky tastes of metal.
Marcooo... Polooo...
This is the world. He is fifteen.

The Alice Poems: THE COMMON THING

Since she's been living upstairs
in the grown-up world
it's not innocence Alice misses
so much as magic.

Feather and chirp, yolk, flying
all converged into words
that meant bird and now
are separate things only.

Two sparrows and a grackle
took seeds from her hand
the whole winter she was six.
They were small things together.

Alice knows the common thing
is having once been small.
She would tell you that kinship happens
even in the worst of childhoods.

The Alice Poems: COMMON LANGUAGE

I

Assume accident, assume robbery,
assume the lover has left, but Alice explains
“Nothing, nothing, it’s just that my mother” –
and the office manager waits,
still fearing what she first feared,
“when I talk to my mother
I start out full and end up less
than I ever was.”

Though she knows Alice only
for typing, tardiness, sugary tea
she knows exactly
what Alice is talking about.
She’s so depressed that she knows
exactly what Alice is talking about,
that the feminine bond means this.

II

Mother bird says “Fee Fi Fo Fum”
when the smell of a human stains the nest.
Leaves, whether it’s eggs or hatchlings.

The one-eyed cat who birthed in the barn
moves the kittens after large hands
come to lift, squeeze, and name.

What parent can stand to see what’s theirs
be touched, how stand by while their imprint
is printed on by life’s other gods?

III

Little Alice in the garden, climbing, then
a small saucer atop the mantelpiece
holding speckled thin blue shards.

Memory from blood – never return
to what you discover. Alice finds only
shell, little pieces, a cry
from the other side of the morning.

TO THE ONE WHO KNOWS BEST

I can't just name you my dark side
and you can't declare me your better *half*
--as wives are called by nervous husbands.

Invisible, still you can't be anything less
than full shaped and loaded
with your own coiling brain.

How else could a shadow have
such strength and weight
to push my mother off buildings, in dreams?

IN THE DARKROOM

10 lines

From the negative
a face blooms underwater
until my mother
shimmers forth, smiling
right out of the darkness.

Sitting in the car
with this memory photo
I live again, and again.
I will always never
not think of her forever.