

KOKUA

Winter Tarot with Easel

Gravel of minutes,
quarry of hours,

hand shadows touch
on upbeat murals

while hurried glances
mask what we know.

Static currents finding voice
through friction,

he twirls a sable brush
in one hand

and reaches for the next card.
Gray dawn transits

over asphalt
to the vein tendered

by a dream, strands of mist
trailing over his sliding glass door.

Bones Sliding Apart In Loam

Perhaps truth is twine-bound and you deliver it
walking sideways like a crab. Or, truth is a ravine
thick with chokeberries, with chameleons standing
at mid-depth, watching the sun set via shadow creep.

No, it's the pregnant mouse rope-dangling in salt fumes
as it climbs, climbs onto your ship, soon to populate
your cargo as your clerks fixate on commerce.

Perhaps, truth will be in your fingers as you fill your lungs,
to blow past saxophone reed that sole, long and low, note
as the curtain drops and you haven't the time to process.

Truth was in the bartender's glance as he wiped ashes
from formica grain when you stood near that exit
trying to chat up the tired waitress, your stanzas
running on and on, unpunctuated, breathless.

Or, perhaps, truth is in the birch saplings planted
up the riverbank weeks after the spill clean-up
started and before I drove to this lake
flickering in a theater of stillness.

One set of truths frames a shimmering mirage,
wishbones snapped short litter moist loam.
Another is a handful of stones ready

to be tumbled into greater beauty,
each one large and heavy enough
to hold a door open for any wind.

This day turns on a bed of nails,
goddess songs becoming
night winds through spruce.

Dancing on a Bricked Square, Portland

Blood jolt prep downed, she rocks
inside her city's hot shimmer.

Buses tube inside our lit hub. She curls
back into the espresso night with the fans

of starlight dancing at an outdoor concert.
Arms rise praising summer, this crescent moon.

The work-week's fractured notes heeled flat
on city square brick, her dancing legs

pumping true wine, free of the boxed hollows
of compromise. Complacent hesitations left

droning on formica. Loss magnified needs
sandpapering ribs, she boogies and bops,

feeding the snapping whips of her veins
in the sweated mist, this tribe's steam

close on thighs and belly, hips, they swing,
jaunt and roll thriving near arches.

Lights dancing on hot skin, hot skin,
moon the ammo, moon the target.

Riverbank, Canvas

Crows bob caws from power lines.

Illusions drained by experience,
you watch the cards dealt face up,

wager broken shells at tide ebb,
sense bones leaning towards loam.

Our current threading the silts
of now, now over burial mounds.

Rails upslope curving east, wrens
spilling from sunrise tree-tops.

The brown-eyed stallions in the hollows
of my ankles speak of beating

this sandpaper wind. Ah, to gallop south
following tidelines of agates! Salt spray

a coarse brush through thick mane,
my throat close to his muscled neck

as the fog mare canters in on the waves.

Pretty Hooker

She offers a quick elixir
with her cameo act,

smiling at all the alone drivers
while swaying in old jeans
and running shoes,

she pretends to be waiting
for the next bus as I nose this one in.

Hoping the staccato dialects of this rush hour
open a selection of wallets

for medicating with timed sex,
she poses her tanned and supple arms

as tropical balm for the stop-lighted fantasies
released from work so ready
to become ingots flung before sunset.

These poachers circle and circle the block
vying to drink from her well-marketed mirage,

pumping a syringe full of pain-killer
smack between her toes.

