

The Head that Wears the Crown

inspired by Ocean Vuong's "The Last Prom Queen in Antarctica"

It's true I'm all fear & a hand that holds on some cards
as the green jacket covers how little I am.
Noticed by no one. How all I've wanted
was to be everything and nothing at the same time.
Maybe we are here to live and to die,
to breathe and exhale and have nothing to show for it.
It was the other night that I curled myself into a cocoon.
My wings ripped off by the broken sound of
my ego & if a thing dies before its time, what use
was the appearance of flight? What use were the eyes
that saw the coming of the Lord? If he shall come,
let it be a merciful reordering of the cosmos. Let it
feel something like the night sky in the country.
How little we understand that a ball in a hand
is more than skill, it is a magical thing. The heavens
have opened up and swallowed me whole. That night,
I prayed and heard not a word, felt my belly cave in on
itself until every lining of my intestines was pulled in
whatever direction another has summoned for it to go.
My favorite kind of sickness is when I have ejected the
bitter contents of another person's will. Ejecting the hatred
forced down my throat, lodged in my esophagus as I try to speak
and have forgotten the sound of my own voice. I want to tell you

a story. I want to motion the palms of my hands toward the air
between us and open the door to another life, a life in which
none of this matters & a life in which everything is rendered
lovely because we have no language to disregard the truth.

To be who we are and what we are is a sacred gesture,
clasping our hands toward one another. Maybe

the last syllable that becomes a closed casket on our praise
will feel protective like my blue jeans that weigh more than
the fear of what people have thought of me. Maybe I'm like
you, one of those people who, when the cocoon opens up,
and the brightening stars flicker, and your shoulders began to
tremble, and your ribs crack in place, runs like hell toward
the angels who wait in praise for the head which erupts
from the ground as the cicadas sing their song to one another.
The boy has become a hum, witness of a time that never ends.

Praise Song for the Day We Fly

*Jump towards me. I hear the mellow words.
But watch your step, I have been waiting for someone to notice me.*

The gray patches that were once darkened islands are now dead
thistles, can only remind the scalp of what it used to know.

I run the pools of tears through the cracks of my fingers the moment
he says to me *Texas* and then another word I cannot understand.

The grays in his pupils are lighter than they used to be and somehow
he still manages to ask me am I afraid of heights or death or the depths.

Maybe this time I will lie to him and tell him I have leaped before this.
Time don't stand still. The grandfather clock which is his name echoes

the voice that feels like it is reaching for the year 1946 or 1948. He scratches
his head, lifting pieces of tenderness from the pores, as the coffee is done.

1946 has come back again laughing and he makes a noise the feels like kids
who have found goodness in the world and refuse to let it go on lonely.

He wants me to make his cup the way he remembers. Black, hot, eight oz.
Texas, he says as I rub his head. He jerks a bit like the quickening of Spirit

and it truly is. A quickening. A glimpse of dirt being spat on, rubbed
cross the eyes and then for a moment things are clearer than he thought.

His grays fall to the floor once more as he takes a sip of the coffee,
its warmth leaping from his lips toward the heavens as he taps his toe.

I take out the black tape recorder for the twentieth time and stare at red.
The numbers begin to run away from home like a mind the garden caught.

Have you got some sugar, young man he says to me and he jerks again.
Around that house all the things that make it home are missing *where...*

where... were the first words of the end, a time of no return.
Heaven only knows if the coffee is good. The body that jerks

and I have cursed the god that made the world this way and the ground
that is so unforgiving and the garden that refuses my seed and the love...

Who are you again? I have answered him the fortieth time and once more
I am the one who delights in rubbing the head of a man who lost time.

What is time but breaths calling back to one another and saying it is good to see you and it's good to meet you and it's good to be good to you.

Jump, he says to me. I smile as I rub the warm side of his cheek and I tell him I have flown before.