Fabulous Bird

by Jerry Ratch

I would have held you longer, if I could. But in this world the flower that turns toward the sun first, gets to name the gods. Just let there be that self-moving thing, a sweet girl mentioned by innocence in an off moment because of her skin, because of the way rain beads up on it.

Fabulous birds were perched nearby where we were, I remember. And in their memory goes the little gods, original, in the midst of it all, and happiness like anything near the river-mouth. Letting themselves dabble in the femaleness of it. In the lower world or on the playing fields, equally at home, feeling the plural arousal of the flesh, and its quiet out-cry to create new flesh.

I would have held you longer if I could, but the beauty was too great to leave there. For a time I had a true god by my side, I know that now, wrapped in the dearest flesh with his tail up, hot, sharp. Twice borne out of the shade, out of form and color.

This may not so easily be swept or brushed aside. I only know this: eternal fecundity is the stepfather of glass, producing much of the inhabited world with its rich textures of blood in-swirled. The one viable heart likely to survive the good dance of the night.

I was like an oyster stirred to produce the pearl. Pure sinew, pure nerve around stone, to remain with the living. The name nobody gave me. Pale rain surrounding my skin, shaven, scraped clean of wrath, anger. And out of families arisen, swollen of the multitude — how many, how often out of the empty gut or palm of the hand rises the lamb? Bells walking, loved one wearing a bell? We were so young. And I was like a lamb walking to slaughter, with you.

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