

Beauty Fell Through the Roof

by Philip F. Clark

A thief of lust,
and sore bones; covered in dust —
Alarmed but not surprised, I invited you to bed.

You were the petty, pretty one,
and I your cicerone to a world you could never imagine:
A trophy I could promenade for the circus —
champagne, sex,
and cocaine. What held me?

The face that fought a claustrophobic beauty:
slick black hair, the nose of a falcon, the sculpted jaw;
your life a rummage, a cock of despair.
Your body, statuesque, white, parading
in your week-old briefs. I paid you
for modeling.

Yet tenderness resided here
among the canvases,
the tubes of paint, brushes, and candle wax;
the splatters of discarded ideas.

We made love the way people said prayers.

I could sleep, folded into you, even when
the nightmares drenched your mouth.
All the omens seeped, black and viscous.
We threw the dice on each night's
archeological dig for desire.

Such timing you had — just like your first appearance,
your last had its coterie of cries, wincings, gasps.
You kept drinking, swayed from pill to pill;
your red mouth uneasy, you slurred the well-mapped pain.
What choice you made of a throne to die on,
in such an elegant Parisian hotel. My darling!
They were lauding me at the moment
you finally stopped thrashing — vomit-stained,
smelling of shit and smoke and gin;
you, the once beautiful thief,
the lark of chance, my pair of snake eyes had come to rest.

