

Martin

by Philip F. Clark

Martin was known for a magnificent chest.
We waited all winter for spring, when like some
first bird announcing a change in the weather
he would slowly disrobe from his shirt.

Those arms would twist over his head,
tousling his deep red hair, and the stomach
with its six-pack would flatten us too,

and the surge of his skin, from nipple
to nipple, would stop our conversation.
He'd sit or stand, as if this was common
to see: in the street walking by, such a man.

His back perfect from swimming, Martin
moved like Hadrian come to life, his laugh
the perfect foil for our stricken eyes
suddenly poised on such beauty.

And that would be it for the hot day, his
meander up and down the damp streets, as he
and friends spoke of last night's opera, pizza
or an exhibition -- the Moronis at the Met.

It was fun, he and we knew, this public
display -- there before us, strangers or friend,
to wonder how in the world such a man
was made from such ardent hands.

"Can you imagine," some would say,
and imagine we would the feel of him, the way
a lucky midnight partner might be given
the chance to sweat there.

One summer, late August and wet --
the city humming and almost empty,
Martin strode out of a bar. A strange look
in his eye warned, striking us with its glass.

"We all get old," someone said as Martin stopped and asked for a light; blew out one breath, and smelling of vetiver, he killed us again.

