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A Beauty That Embarrasses

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A BEAUTY THAT EMBARRASSES,

Tibor Teleman's wife, for example,
whom he holds by the elbow
as she stands out in the busy traffic.
Seeing them, Tibor holding her arm,
protecting her from the eyes of other men,
from the madness of traffic,
I see him thinking:
What am I doing with this still beautiful
thing that demands so much attention?
I used to be a young man.
Now I am old and harassed, a librarian,
and I just want to sink into a big
comfy easy chair when
I get home.
That battle should be over, the apples
and cabbages picked.
Women looked down on us when we were boys.
We saw then that they were gross
flowers kept in opaque greenhouses,
tended with gloved hands.

Her beauty is so intense and heavy
that Tibor, holding her arm, is
embarrassed, being the owner.
Men who surround such women are tired.
They have saddened and worn out
before their wives
who are some hardy variety.

She makes happiness on the last day
of the world.
Her heart is innocent like a little bird's
and if she has lovers they are like
the wandering ghost of yourself.
"She makes beautiful salad dressing,"
Tibor says, making a remark
that is a kind
of continuity between your thoughts
and his.