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Letter from Limbo

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LETTER FROM LIMBO

I.

Your feelings exhaust me, dearest.
It's the way you suffer—with style,
the way books describe it.

It makes me feel
like an old-school stoic, aching
aimlessly, in search of a mild way out.

I breathe in a vacuum,
and like a good macrobiotic I chew
my water. You call it care.

I nod, drinking the fear.

II.

Did I say, “strong?” Did I say,
“I need to be strong?” Terrible things
are about to happen to me,

and maybe you—another consideration.
Something like fire begins to work down
from our eyes. We're lit candles,

you and I, altar decorations,
and proud.

III.

I remember the saints, their various martyrdoms,
the cut breasts St. Agatha holds,
St. Adrian in the anvil.

But the saints have let me down. This
is a lonely ditch, where saints never visit,
nor gods either, those egomaniacs.

And see how I suck you into my needs?
I pretend you're one of me.
Suffering, I pretend, is our vocation.

IV.

Healing water oozes from a stone.
A vision is somewhere about to be vouchsafed.

God bless the luckless, waiting.