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Intimate Lighting

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the indolent wind picks through the treetops,
the dusk flicks on the streetlamps, a church bell
appeals over rooftops, and I sit in the dark
with my elastic kind of laughter, resilient and true,
the harder it pulls forward as a man,
the harder it falls back as a boy.

INTIMATE LIGHTING

After the last house lamp is switched off
and the wet emerald glow of the city night
intrudes between the parted draperies,
the living room assumes a less familiar shape
and draws us into what the mind regards
a darker and more indelible world.

To you by now, your abortion today
should bring on hot blinding light,
a white noise like traffic in gridlock,
or perhaps a warning from God,
the Bible falling from the bookshelf.
But it is quiet. There is only a tinny sound
in your head, not the ringing of ears,
not the taunting rasp of lost motherhood,
just that you feel nothing.

On the green grounds of the clinic
I had circled a man-made pond
which was like a window into a womb
but where nothing seemed to move.
While you lay under anesthetic
I thought of why we are drawn to water,
that its clear pacification is a kind of sham
we don't avoid because of its other-worldliness:
the link between floating inside our mothers
and evolving millions of years from the muck.
But this is half of what I wanted to say,

the half that let me be stunned when a crow
in one graceful swoop picked clean
with its beak a sliver of a fish
and flew off unshaken in its flight.

What is the resolution of a life gone forever
if what it was wasn't meant to be?
What kind of dignity can be salvaged
when death nears the whisk of a hand?
I drape the window, ending the intimate lighting
and motion you to the bedroom.
There is a sharp breathy sound
I've never heard before, a barren laughter
imperceptible from weeping.
How clear it is. And ceaseless.

WOMEN IN BLACK

In Alicante, during the Semana Santa festival,
you sat alone in a crowded maison, drunk and purple-lipped
from table wine, staring out at the dim esplanada—
the yellow and blue mosaic walkway, a topiary garden—
green elephants, by a trick of light, that seemed
to trudge trunk to tail. Women dressed in black
bearing lit white candles and rosaries walked behind
a mile-long parade where flashbulbs strobed
as randomly as fireflies, where strolling Easter choirs
competed like two stations playing on the same radio,
where the pink and white flowered floats of Christ icons
perfumed the air they wheeled through. In the bay,
small fishing boats had lights strung to their masts.
From the ceiling of the maison hung cured haunches of ham,
chorizo, blocks of headcheese, sausages that gave off
a charred smokehouse odor. A thick cigarette haze
stung your eyes and your wine glass once touched
your lips by surprise, as though it moved involuntarily.