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# Darkroom Nights

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Out on the street, lovers saunter, eating celery.  
Azucenas spill from the windows. Churchbells, anvils,  
roses ring in a single translation: *Vivid, la vida sigue*,  
Live, for life goes on.

None of us has time for a single  
life to stun the air as a flower can, fully realized.

Therefore we gather, *en masse*.

## DARKROOM NIGHTS

One night in Amecameca's Hotel *Sacro Monte*  
I lay awake—the bed hard, the pillows white  
with the geranium and stock we put there.  
Mountains cold, moon aloof—Edward  
shivered as he slept. I couldn't close my eyes.  
I watched a chair cast ribs of shadow on the wall.  
How well they kept their secrets, I thought—  
the things of the world mute, patient.

The bed was a lumpy altar—  
I had been worshipped there, lifted out  
of myself, by the ecstasy of my specific female  
flesh made goddess of the flowers, flush and open.  
I was able to stop time, back to the first time  
we'd touched—let it be always the first time,  
Edward said. Sex is magical thinking—  
water burns, flowers dawn in the stones.  
The first time, in Glendale, he'd looked at me  
first through the camera: an hour's delay,  
glance as touch, and finally, finally touch—  
a slippery transit, beyond all limits.

Was it magic, or skill, when he took me  
naked on the *azotea*? in the sun shooting finished  
photographs—decisive, my body a figure  
of Aztec craft, every curve and cut made  
with love and power joined in sure design.  
I had a dignity delicate and fit.  
Yet I'd dread it when he'd say,

Come, Zinnia—

I'll shoot heads of you today.

Those days I lived as a man—that is,  
wore jeans, smoked a pipe, refused to make  
vows to my lovers. I was a willful solitude.  
A doctor had said, You will never have children.  
I could make no appeal—the doors in my cells  
slammed shut. My body sealed, a tomb. I appeared  
to be, and was not, a woman.

I lived in the darkroom  
of my body, mute of all light. My body had  
betrayed me—or had it freed me?  
I wondered, do we ever invent our lives? We yield,  
or we rebel. When are we our own?

That night I waited for the moon to sink to dawn,  
a glimmer of the irreconcilable just beginning  
in the back-lighting of my brain.

In the morning we climbed the volcanos. Below  
stretched a *mesa* of level green and blankets of water  
where hyacinths floated, above them clouds  
of infinite muscle. I saw everything to scale—  
how small we are. My questions hushed.  
What I thought I was, I wasn't. What I thought  
I knew, I didn't. What I wished to do,  
I couldn't. I was single, a moment  
alive in skin and bones,  
simple seeing.