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Waiting for the Body

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Three Poems · *Maureen Seaton*

WAITING FOR THE BODY

Some of the prostitutes on the lower
West Side are really men beneath their
make-up and their fish-net stockings but
it's difficult to tell. Sometimes I stare,
trying to figure it out. Usually,
what I feel inside is so chaotic,
I look the other way, pretend they're not
about to get themselves bashed or killed,
or let another piece of themselves slither
into hell. I don't know what to do
about them, want to run and find mothers
to hold each one. They smile, if I look, strut
around thinking this is what desirable
women do, this is what they were born for.

Once, a former date knocked on my door, and I
let him in although he looked dazed, strange,
although he smelled of terror and greed,
although I was tired and my kids sleeping.
And he said he wanted to make love, that
he'd just been to the city and picked up
a hooker because he couldn't have me;
and he was crying, and I imagined
his penis between her lips, how her
saliva would still be there, dried up,
how I could save him with this one favor,
how he would touch my hair afterwards.
And I vomited quietly through my mouth
and my nose, not knowing who to trust.

Now an old friend, buoyant with sex, approaches
my car window. He's about to tell me
of the carton of Luckys someone gave him
as payment for bending over a desk
and moaning, "Yes, Daddy." He longs to be
forgiven the bargain of his body
for a weekend supply of smokes; he
jokes about how easily married men
give in, how much he values his freedom,
how no one will ever tie him down.
I've known this man for years. He taught me
about music and the heart of a young boy
rescued by the spirit from the South Bronx,
how the heart stays true and waits for the body.

THE MIRACLES

I am a miracle. Not
the only miracle. A fox

living in the dark perfume
of the reservoir

counts. You,
from your father's bed—

pure, intact, that
aqua light. Is it

greedy to gather berries
from the cliff-face,

gulp them, your other hand
free to clasp air? I