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Two Poems · Jeannine Savard

THE BISHOP DREAMS HE WAS A BRUNETTE IN PARIS IN 1860

for Brian

I wash my silks out in a bowl,
squeezing and pressing air like saliva
through my slip. The mole on my cheek has grown
and I have hair again. It's loose
and I hold a black lacquered barrette
in my hand. Outside three women stand
and point, their lips moving like squares

sucked up from the mud. They are about me.
They are the chatterboxes unleashing a pledge
of silence. Without me, they'd still spit
the wine at dusk, a real curse
to undo . . . The colporteur is peddling

his saint cards today. His Mary rapt
with attention. Martha with trays and quick snakes
at her ankles. The other ladies without blemish.
I'll invite him in to discuss his fondness
for one more than the others,
Theresa, or Joan? But he cannot

say which: "Love goes like a tattered veil
in all directions . . . and when I forget
even one for a second . . ." It's an atrocity? "Yes,
something like flies attached to my hair cut, a hell

of a shame." Who then, what lags out there on the walk?
What nerve thrills
the one with the painted pin on her hat,
her greedy arm rivaling the branch
for light. And the blue stickler for straight seams

on her legs and eyes, a tongue with rungs
to the red grass she stares down, *my mother?*
to a knife? And the last one standing like a heave,
flat to the wind, a poor board face,

shoulders slumped as if loaded with horseshoes? *All,*
me? Why is the room empty, and the dredges at the Ash
gone to their afternoon pastries? I'm alone again

at the marble foot, a softness in my fingers
moist over his cold arch, up and around the toes
searching again through bone for an influence, again
for the hot, unlimited blood of supply.

GRAVITATIONAL MASSES IN THE DREAM WAY

Here the weather has just broken. Rain
detailing the leaves across the sidewalk,

ledger pages softening to meal with the spread
of gasoline in the open street. I'm in a boat

built by Chagall; it is red
like the dress of the winter wedding guest

or the chairs facing Lear in the stone theatre
fifty feet below. Chagall himself is standing

on the corner waiting for the light, the effulgent center
to change. A netted sack of firm garden vegetables

hangs over his shoulder, green and yellow peppers
impinging, two drops of milk, one on each eyelid

trickling down to the bones in his cheeks. I want to kiss him
but the clouds are shifting and the hands behind