1973

Tricks

Steven Orlen

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1470

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.
TRICKS

for J & B

Who can sleep with so much pain around? I wave goodbye
to the loveless, asleep and waking, dreaming of me.
From the insomniac sadist who prowls an empty room
I steal his whip to tease him. I pinch his fanny and leave.
In the subway I toss a kiss to the exhibitionist
and close my eyes, for who can change character?

Who but the devious priest will bruise his knees
for those whose lives are limited by pain
and will not learn? The amateur whore
and the lonely clerk who refuses the joys of flirtation
sit separately in the park and brood—
I send anonymous lovenotes; I offer desire
with vaseline and roses with thorns
for who will play tricks with love in his heart?

Today I marry a widow, and tomorrow a man,
and tonight in a tavern I meet a reluctant poet
whose penis is smaller than mine—
I refuse to measure, for that is his lot.
In another mood, I might tell the right lie
and guide their worst fears to the edge of madness
and push and wait at the bottom with my net.

There is something at the same time pursues
and leans inside me. It is my other half.
When I weep the bitter tears, it laps them up and laughs
and lies down tired and refreshed. Each night
I plunge to the limits of heart's desire and stroke
its belly and count the stars circling my head.
On off-nights, it digs a hole in my right hand
and says, "Love thyself, who else has the time?"