Moments of Shared Glamour: A Conversation

Apparently we are important to each other.

An evening flight suspended as a quality:

But we know this: each can be touched without the other knowing.

What touches one can only be assumed by the other,

Though we pose our conjugations with fond regards.

This constitutes amity. We confer and on this we agree:

All depends on who’s watching.

What’s spoken is what you see when I hear.

That’s how we feel the meaning of our words.

A rainstorm where you smell it first

And the wind changes then it plinks and soon you’re covered in it.

Like sitting down to find the chair

Still warm from someone’s ass.

It was hot and you began:

She captures the most amazing look on her face.
Joy at the adulation she receives, and at the same time, panic. It’s amazing.

Her father was a contortionist.

Her mother a street singer. And prostitute.

She was addicted to morphine, and there was something with another woman.

They were very intimate.

Well, with the friend it was obvious, but I don’t know about her.

I don’t really know what it would mean to say she was a lesbian.

Very painful. A very painful life.

What did it sound like? When she had that look on her face?

Applause. It was deafening. Have you ever seen anyone like that, utterly enthralled

and at the same time horrified?

The face can go in two directions. Maybe more.

Elsewhere and meanwhile, she had no need. Her face went in just one direction.

Does mine do that when I am working?

She wasn’t legal but that doesn’t mean anything to the face.

She was working in a garage.

It smelled like oil, and it was dark, and the work looked hard, but not terribly hard.

You know how it is, time passes and it takes your energy but doesn’t hurt exactly.
That was the direction of her face.

Worktired.

It doesn’t matter to the face but it does matter to the police.

She must have believed that he was helping her when he offered her the trunk of his car.

To hide in.

I don’t remember, and you can’t help me.

What did her face do when she realized?

I only remember the enormous field of wheat.

Yes. It was a golden light, sustaining, like nature is supposed to be.

Beyond nature, maybe supernatural.

Not what you see when you think of the traffic in women.

Which is what is happening.

I don’t know if she finds it beautiful, or if she only halfway realizes

That the wheat is moving.

That wheat for certain is moving in more than one direction,

Like her beautiful face, or the hairs on a horse hide.

You will say that I am imagining things,

But it is possible that she dislikes the wheat because it is only beautiful.

Someone’s field like any field, not doing a thing for her.
To be bought and sold somewhere obvious,

Somewhere she could point to later.

If someone cared to ask her and she could say

Yes, there, this is where the problem started.

That is useful. A positive ID.

(And you would be right. I am imagining things. Hating the wheat—that’s the kind of thing you think about later. It’s not what you feel in the moment.)

Well. Later in the whorehouse slave-place their faces exchange something.

Something kind and powerless.

There is power left in there

Because they are still alive and there is not really any way to drain it all out.

But they are trying: their owners are sedating them.

Men with hammy, fat-fingered hands.

What their faces do, they do by pushing through a haze.

A transmission, a kind one, nothing more.

Don’t get me wrong. A sensation is not a labor union.

It’s not an army.

I didn’t say it was.

I know. There was not even teamwork.
But still, a karaoke spasm in between customers.

It’s not nothing.

Did you know they had a disco ball, even there, in the worst possible place?

Little glints of light all over them, a swarm of bees.

They watched her sing, sedated, waiting for the next bad thing to happen.

A split is opening in the earth.

A tree is falling down, and I am in a trance.

I think she is too.

(Not you, not then. You were not in a trance. You were right there, alert. And you were somewhere else. Another story.)

Later, she goes in a bathtub.

I was the bedspread.

That let me keep my eyes open, with that man there.

Being the bedspread.

Elsewhere and meanwhile, it is not the worst place but still.

There’s no love, there’s just pheromones.

Creatures sense the fear in each other.

Or else attraction.

There is no solidarity among women.
They just threaten each other.

They flirt with each other to get what they need to survive, to get ahead.

You knew this.

They taught you this when you were a child.

Everyone knows but many deny it.

It is part of why you love me that I sometimes can’t remember.

It makes me charming and ridiculous.

Or so I believe and I may be misguided here.

(I used to think the same about tequila.)

But you have always known this.

It is why you like him when he tells you people are insects:

She kills him, shoots him right in the head, when just a minute before they were doing it.

Doing it.

I often forget that this world is like this.

I mistake it for some other, tender world.

That’s just me, my fault.

My bad.

So it comes as a bit of a shock, oh my god, she’s a spider.

There are spiders that bite the heads off their boyfriends right after they mate.
Oh yeah. The skintight leather outfits.

The really long legs.

Her tiny head—oh yeah.

She is a praying mantis.

It’s a whole cosmology.

He wears a suit in the desert.

(I don’t think it is Prada. You could tell from far away, I am sure. The faggotry is in the details. You always say that. And there is some evidence of this. I watch and learn but for now all I can say for sure is that’s a suit.)

But I do know this— it can only feel like the pantyhose days.

Summer jobs in offices and you have to get in the car in the parking lot

And sweat gathers in the crotch and stays there,

And when you turn the car on,

Heat blasts out from the air conditioner:

That is what it feels like to wear a suit in the desert.

Trust me.

There’s nothing there, no one’s come to meet him.

When the plane descends,

I’m sure he forgets about the sweat in the crotch.

(There I go again, you will tell me. How do I know what he forgets? But it’s more than a hunch, more than women’s intuition.)

He has to hit the dirt.
Trust me.

He is not thinking about sweat in his crotch.

In this bleak landscape.

Now, me, when I see a suit in the desert, I go up to the guy.

I know that you would never do that.

It would make you uncomfortable.

You would just stand there, avoid eye contact, no one here but us chickens.

But me, I go up to him, real nice, not too aggressive.

And I say exactly what I know you are thinking, shy one.

I say Hey, man. Is the brim of your hat a leading edge?

There is nothing there.

That is what it means.

The desert.

They go to a swimming pool in some shitty desert town.

They try to make out, but it doesn’t go well because they don’t really like each other.

It’s really hard to have sex underwater.

Under the best of circumstances.

He doesn’t hurt her, but it’s too much when he dunks her.

(You always hate it when it’s hard to breathe. I have never blamed you for this but I don’t mind it as much as you do.)
They walk on the rocks.

For a while they walk naked with their boots on.

It should be sexy.

It should be beautiful to touch the world that way.

No one can see you because no one is there.

Nice enough the sun on the skin, just for you and your friend.

Should be lovely.

But instead it’s just scalding.

They drive in the car. A lot.

It can be exhausting.

It is tiresome to see men respond to their shame.

I am wiped out.

She painted the swimming pool—

Remember that?

A mythic creature.

Like a goddess.

Yes.

It is craggy, empty, shitty, even while she paints it.

Could be a cave painting.
Pre-ruined.

A minor bowl in the earth.

Remember?

Not really.

Sometimes you are a fool like that.

I know. But sometimes it all comes back to me.

This is not one of those times.

It’s wordless.

Often that is how people actually are.

Women arrive after a long journey to take a hot steambath together.

We saw it from a distance, through clouds of steam.

There’s lots of laughter.

They all look like myth.

To you, everything looks like myth.

Do you remember how she always shuts her dress in the car door?

Every time.

That is how things look to me: a dress in the car door.

A pratfall.

Two fingers in the eyes and a honking horn sound.

A blue cardboard hotel room.
A toga and gigantic glasses.

She is not sexy when she shuffles up to him.

What are you wearing actually?

Well, if it is so wrong, then help me here.

My head is in the armhole.

He is petulant, bored, annoyed.

And me, my nightgown there, over my head.

An infinite time, caught in a white bedsheet.

I am not even a ghost.

I am a Halloween child with a sheet on.

I am Loie Fuller’s nightmare.

Nothing flowing, no ether left, no atmosphere,

Nothing for you here, just me and my clumsy shoulder,

Stuck. A trainwreck not a serpentine dance.

And what did you do?

You laughed.

Why did I do that?

Because it was hilarious.

There’s distance and there’s velocity.
What they do and what they see.

Sometimes all of those things run together.

Can you separate sensations?

How does one sensation elevate itself?

Is it the same like people do?

You just stick your nose in the air.

You go to Kinko’s and get a card printed.

It says you’re important, but it doesn’t cost you much.

Or, or, or, what about the ones that sink below and come to the fore?

Must we maintain this? The cardinal points?

The up, down, front and back of it?

Aren’t here and gone enough?

If we knew how it started it would be a story, then we’d know how it ended.

The story of sensation itself.

Once upon a time.

When was the first time and how

Is every time after that always another first time?

We always forget that the mood has passed.

The pose was struck before.
It’s still about the face.

The expressionless mask, they say, is the most affective.

Like the way she looked when he went into the desert.

Essays have been written about that.

Are you going to make me guess?

Does it matter?

Noted and documented.

A thousand different journals in just as many languages.

Isn’t every passing moment an origin?

Now you sound like the oracle.

I’m not playing a game. I don’t know the rules.

Things, feelings, circumstances just happen.

I can’t control, I just interpret.

You always did think I was an oracle.

It would bug you, my sibylline chatter and the way

I call out at night sometimes

With so much confidence, as if

Mine were no ordinary nightmare.

Everything is such a portent—
It would bug you if things were different but

As it is you find it kind of cute.

When the time comes (you would say if—but oracles, we all say when)

When we know if I am right, or you are, when it is an end-of-days-endgame-time,

You will repeat me then, regardless, because it kind of sounds good.

In fact, I’m memorizing you now: it’s all about the face.

(I see that you are memorizing my face, too, but when the time comes I know you won’t be able to repeat it.)

The desert is an expressionless mask.

The face in different directions.

(You see—these are not the same. We can’t both be the oracle, and we won’t know until it is revealed.)

Except for this: the first sip of champagne.

Her first sip!

Yes.

She doesn’t like the taste of it but slowly she begins to accumulate sensations.

You can watch them add up.

They tip her disposition towards the liking of it.

You watch the whole thing wash over her face.

First the eyes, apprehensive.
The cheeks and jaw draw downward into a frown.

Eyes close and lips pucker.

Then something shifts in the space of a barely perceptible pause.

All the muscles lift as if by strings pulled from above.

Then there’s joy.

You see it all happen on her face.

It ripples across my own.

And to others I look impassive. That is a fabulous trick.

Because even my tastebuds tickle.

And no one knows it. It’s so simple.

You can’t look away.

A flutter.

And the future looks bright.

Do your eyelashes brush the future when you blink?

There is one guy that I recognize because he has long ones.

Also a child. Your godchild, actually. Very long—his eyelashes.

The godchild, I would know him anywhere,

Though he grows deceptively, when I am not looking.

You’re not really in control of duration when you’re looking, are you?
Me?

One.

Oh.

Does it matter?

I think it adds to the pleasure if you’re not.

Well.

Well. That is true for a lot of things, isn’t it?

Depends on your position.

Yes. So to speak.

The sounds of every day are very loud; they are main events.

A rack of postcards that squeals while it is spinning in the wind.

Remember when she stabs herself in the chest?

A light stab.

A flesh wound. Just enough to hurt. A lot.

The pain registers on her face as she’s looking off at him.

He’s going off with someone else.

I was the only one who saw the look of anguish that she produced upon herself.

She must have trusted you.

I am like that. I notice other people’s anguish. I am often told this.
Walking away.

He has a purpose.

He wants to touch the ticket stubs, and the turnstiles,
The tweeds, the plaids, the newsprint.
The surfaces of everything, the whole city.

A repressed gay thing—
I have heard them say it—
And this is not a light accusation in this day and age—
What could be more shameful than to hide it?
But what they are too afraid of even to say is this—

Are you sitting down?

This is it: what if it is what it is?

It is what it is?

That’s right. His open drive to touch everything.

Come on. That’s scary.

Everyone loves his face.

But not me. I’m strictly a hands girl.

His hands on the buttons, and the leathers, the pants and pocketseams.
The motions, the handings-off. Body to body as he moves through the city.

The face is not a two-way surface that takes in input and puts out expression.
Wait. What?

The face is not a sign for a referent inside the skull behind.

What does it refer to?

His face is a hand, a tentacle. I love his hands.

I recently saw a demon whose hands are its eyes.

Its observing surface is the palm of its own hand.

That is a seductive idea and also a dangerous one.

You have never understood this.

Look: we believe there is a difference.

We believe in a boundary that separates us by touch.

It is different than the boundary that separates us by sight.

Speak for yourself, babe.

Don’t tell me what I believe.

The origin of shame or modesty has something to do with the confusion.

And anyway, you’re changing your tone.

What’s the matter? You need more coffee?

Does that mean I should have worn a bra?

I didn’t know this was an orthodox affair.

I always mess that up.
Did you ever feel like you could hang from the hands of an enormous clock?

Sometimes, when the volcano goes off, or the meteor hits the earth. Sometimes I feel it.

Can you actually do that, bend that way?

I didn’t find dance remarkable until I thought to ask.

Regarding the body they say I am a slow learner.

Yes. Slow.

What I can do has its limits.

But in the other direction I know I have it in me.

I could pee and eat a chicken leg at the same time, a greasy one. Done it.

I got yelled at as a kid for doing that.

I was eating cookies and I didn’t want to leave the cookies.

So I took them into the bathroom with me to take a shit.

I was defecating and eating my Vienna fingers, and my father came in.

He had to explain to me how disgusting that was.

It had to be explained to me.

It was just efficient.

What’s wrong with it?

It is just too close in order of process.

Why not, why not the sweet taste and the sour stink?
Why not let them mingle?

My mother cried throughout the whole thing.

(I didn’t know if I was supposed to hold her hand or not.)

People imagine that they see all kinds of sexual acts.

People seem to be having sex everywhere, in the background, the deep background.

You really can’t tell what they are.

I mean, if they’re girls or boys.

What they’re working with.

Yes. There are the two who are having sex on the wing of an airplane.

That’s remarkable.

It’s a remarkable end.

You can’t tell if the airplane, the people, and the clouds are actually separate.

They are all drawn from the same continuous line.

Everyone is kind of a freak.

You’re a freak whether you’re deserted or deserting.

We’re always leaving or being left.

Especially me.

Oh, you should talk.

The oncoming horizon comes toward us as the one behind recedes into
the distance.

Yes. We’re at the end of the earth.

Not in a suburb.

We are not even in the nation.

Everybody’s working, trading something, making a buck.

Everybody has a gun or a bandolier.

I don’t even know if they’re people.

It doesn’t seem like they get laid a lot but I could be wrong.

They have very strange bodies. They are blobs and animals.

And I myself am nothing special, I assure you.

At the time it seemed like music from no place.

People’s outfits are crazy, from nowhere.

Or everywhere.

People wear a lot of armor.

You can see how it could be better if you have a lot of body armor.

People play cards and trade guns there.

Games. We play games.

You think it’s all a game.

Don’t you?

Don’t you keep your eyes open?

Once one could watch the whole thing, just lying there like a bedspread.
Innocent. Inanimate. Now we’re expected to interact.

You were never innocent.

I like it with the lights on but if you need it dark I’ll pull the curtains.

Here I have nothing to say in defense of my medium.

Patiently I watched and I saw it all unfold before it became real.

Isn’t that crazy?

It’s crazy, right?

How could before become the conceit of after?

Do we really believe that anything came before this?

Glamour precedes, glamour declines: spent allure.

The fabulous quotient of extinction.

Sad, really. Worktired.

The word was said, it was heard, a face was made.

Less than champagne and more than crotch sweat.

Nothing its own sensation.