

NANCY BOTKIN

Love is Blue

I find myself gulping for air which has no melody.

At best, it's cymbals crashing. Blue ocean
as far as I can see, and my body in love with water. My body
in love with undercurrents. These are difficult
matters. During revolutions people destroy their own artifacts,
create a million cacophonies. All that fire. All that roaring.
You'd think lighting a match would be clean and simple.

Long ago in high school a girl crumpled her math test
before bending over a small mirror to apply mascara
in a sweeping motion while the rest of us were solving for x.
The enraged teacher stood next to her desk. She paused and held
the raised wand like an orchestra conductor. Without taking her eyes
off the teacher, she brought it down slowly so that everyone
in the room would continue believing in music.

Divine

They are not capable of leading a double life.
These two love-sick teenagers standing
in the shadows, away from the sun,
away from the river that receives brown
sludge from its tributaries. They can't be anywhere but here,
and she can't love anyone other than this boy
who has perfected a cool way of jerking his head
to get the hair out of his eyes.
He grabs her open coat by the collar
and pulls her close. Several silver hooks cling
the edge of her ear. They both bring cigarettes
to their mouths and can't imagine a day when
they will tire of the other's complex moods,
untangling them like a knot, a knot
on a thin gold chain,
a knot they have to bring
into better light, and then find
a needle to insert
into the heart of it.

Instructions

I don't know why I think of her now, in mid-May, while I sit in the yard drinking a cold beer, but she comes to mind, S, who rolled a joint and offered it to me in the bedroom that she locked with a key tied to a string worn around her neck to keep her mother out, and her sister, her fraternal twin, another S, who was taller, thinner, more hip, who walked around with her eyes half-closed on purpose, who flunked most everything but wanted to learn French, who wore floppy hats and silver bracelets and purple bell-bottoms. But S didn't have any papers, so she pulled the cover off a tampon and fumbled around for awhile, and I stood by watching until she had something that resembled a cigarette, and I tried to inhale the way she instructed, but I coughed and she did too, and we laughed, and she opened the window wider because her mother was yelling from the bottom of the stairs, and she yelled back that she was burning incense, and I think of her because of this heat wave, or the pungent cherry blossoms, or maybe the dandelions' ghostly heads.