

A rat/drunk with love of cat/and hiding/and checkered floors//slipped on a banana skin/dazed into fear now/collided with the housewoman//died

-Ankur Agarwal

The Late News
-Howard Good

It's what happens when you overthink,
a cloud of birds boils up
from the field behind the house
as if the country all around were burning,
and sitting there
with your head in your hands,
how do you know it isn't?
I used to worry about the portable
electric hair dryer shorting out,
which would come first,
36 months or 30,000 miles,
a cop, big gut hanging over his gun belt,
who walks like he's got crotch rot,
and then one night I heard screams,
saw refugees wheeling carts
through the village,
their faces muddily lit by
the solicitous flames,
and now the bridge lights
look diamond-like in the distance,
and the woman in the Laundromat,
still young but never pretty,
bears the same name as a province in France,
and now silver ribbons of rain
are tangled in your hair.

We're to Walk Through California
-Ray Sucre

Trouble in, out.
Backpacks, combinations—
waspsuckle.
Chewing highway—
a boar stunt.
Trouble in, drosphilia,
wet hair, febrile heat,
trouble out.

That tank of batshit flagged
by hitchers rode to Fairfax proper.

Some block of tapes,
daffy, grand, became
headphones and thick spit,
tripled with heel-sweat, palm salt,
in a black-booted retrograde,
walking.

Brief Encounter in the Museum
-Shome Dasgupta

I hear the calling of my name in the sound of foot-
steps; I do not stop until I feel a tap on my shoulder. I
turn around and see pain's glory; we do not speak, nor
do we continue to walk, but we stand still and study
each other until we fall.

We are motionless: I am a mosquito, you are amber,
and we're fossilized.

Millions of years later, paleontologists will find us on
a piece of bark; they will see the petrified look on our
faces and wonder what had caused such eyes. We can-
not answer, for we are in each other's mouth, wishing
we were made of cotton and orange peels.

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