

*From THE MOLLYHAWK POEMS – Poems by Michael Ventura,
Drawings by Cyndy Webendorfer. Wings Press, 1977. Out of print.*

FROM A JOURNAL

I sit beside the radio like a camper by a fire.
They've tracked the storm for days.
It's passing us now the way a long train passes.

I've taken a room, but not the sort I'd like.
I think I'd like an iron bedstead, a vanity, and musty
wallpaper (fleur-de-lis!). A writing table,
a reading lamp, a view of the sea. I'm thinking
of several small pictures
of Matisse, interiors, remarkable
for their tenderness toward objects:
only a lemon on a bureau,
only a shabby, puffy chair.
French doors open on a balcony
at the oblique last light of day:
you see a bay, and sailboats? I can't remember.
I mention these Matisse because I've loved them
And they are things that can be loved without pretense.

The room I actually *have*, and was lucky to get,
has no writing table,
and its walls are the green of canned peas.
Without the table I can't type
and I miss my machine's clatter –
its noise is a kind of company.

There's a bureau, an end table, a lamp
with a yellow shade – the light is like a sick-room's.
(That's only what it looks like, it doesn't depress me.)
On one wall, a tinted photograph of Kennedy,
like a cherub, his cheeks too rosy and his lips too red.

The boats of the rich and the middling-rich
have slammed against their wharves,
but the radio reports
that "There've been no fatalities." Still,
today everyone's words were spoken like condolences,
even the simplest, addressed to me, "That'll be
such-and-such cents," or "Your mail, sir."
I re-read her letter, thinking I might have written it:

“That’s all I have to say to you, for now.
It is storming here, the street is flooded, the cars
slowly slosh through like beasts.
The reflections of their headlights are like jellyfish.
Is this my panic speaking, or the storm?
And why do I insist
on such distinctions?”

from **LIKE DRIFTWOOD**
for Eugenia Marshall

v.
I am trying to pull in the line of our lives
but there is something very strong at the end of it.
Whatever it is, I am not as strong, but if I let go
I’ll have nothing, and if I don’t let go
the line will break, I’ll have nothing.

WAVES

Don’t mistake repetition for Time.

THE LEAVING

My eyes run lightly on this page,

two children on a strip of beach,
running always away.

Here I didn't look into anyone's face,
but wrote verses, and remembered,
and let my life hang like a coat.

Tomorrow I will put it on again.
For a few days it may keep
the fresh scent

of this wind, breath of the sea.
The beach, a white dash
of my thought –

at times I rested my face in my hands.
Last night I dreamed they were hard as claws.
Two children ran before me on the sand.

Tomorrow the merciful
limbo
of travel –

a day without art, a day without love.
I think they are the children on the beach.
When they are called, they do not come.

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