

Poem for Joan

I do not want
to know what you were thinking the night
you disappeared.

Already I know too much:

the flickering light of a television
all afternoon
 the wrists
of an old man in pajamas watching,
shuffling a deck, reshuffling
 or in Spain last week
a child shifting
its weight in the womb,
the mother at the last minute pardoned, permitted
to live out her life in prison.

Always the exquisite
cowardice of the intellect,
pressing a tailored suit before
appointments with suffering.
 There is
enough suffering.

From the vacant lot where your body was found, the smell
of cucumbers turning soft.

 The moon's skin
has an unhealthy sheen at the edge of
Newark, late in August.
I know now:
every driver on the freeway is a lunatic with teeth
invisible
as cucumber seeds.

I am frightened, Joan, and I want
to live bravely.
 For grandfathers,
children, skylarks this
is a stinking country.
 Sing to me

with a crow's voice,
without loveliness, fiercely

earthbound.

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