

Contemplating Homelessness

A man thinking over what he will do the day before he has to leave his house.

tonight, and where to go, where to sleep

These same questions could be tendered to the stars
under the assumption philosophy warrants derision.
Or maybe not. Give me then the stars' dumb luck
in preference to the pointless blank
gaze of other systems: money that can't sweat
skip, run, jump, although it speaks
while pennilessness is rough, tanned, and muscular,
Poverty is pretty *louche*, in fact, and voiceless.
A final undeposited check may be a grand comedian.
Or maybe the awkward matter
is simply related to objects in transition –
things which can be put inside safe storage
things which can be easily disposed, junked, or sublimated
and objects consigned to an accumulated oblivion.
There is a place for mementos in limbo
like a purgatory for the silently depressed
facing streetwise catastrophe with too little
left to value against the cost of breaking even.

Thinking over friends, fear and laughter

Many years ago in a strangled past
which like every past or future under circumstances
when the stars have no other set intentions
and fate resembles vectors scribble-scratched
in a past which resembled *long, long ago*
far-far away – given the layers of past tenses proverbial –
I knew a grey man who owned properties and another
who managed the rentals. They kept long hours
unusually long hours in each other's company
for businessmen weathered by strife and commerce,
I suppose. I couldn't understand
their persistent laments. I was so impressed
simply because they related less
like an old guy speaking to his on-the-job
carpentry skilled underling than friends, well,
yes, pals. Did that mean masterminds of helplessness?

Did that mean understanding the laws of threat?
Did that mean robber barons upping rents?

I hung out drinking beer and coke
(between friends they never charged a cent) when suddenly
the pall of business called. The regular
guy whispered. Nodded his brow;
the old man's blue eyes deepened. I remember
laughter, then the shadows, *contracts, law, leases*.

The mold

My address.
It's unimportant.
The eviction notice read: *Mold remediation at –*
It wasn't the most elegant apartment.
Nothing overstated. Including the rot.
The space was simpler than a threadbare capsule.
The front yard welcomed weeds. And hosted rocks.
Three rooms. And between them less to comment
on than the sum of domestic bric-a-brac
minus visible interstices. The old-timey furnace
flared too brightly. And the gas
ensconced me in welcomed heat midwinter
intermingled with drifts too pungent;
besides which the furnace rods clunked;
I stared into the clunky threat
feeling happier with all of it
than any happiness sustained in transit.
The mold must have arrived in secret
the way thieves, ghouls, or spies infiltrate

countries of the living who stubbornly imagine
themselves counting beads on an abacus
of coming days
whether the future is spent in a car
spent in a poverty trap
spent on a thread.

And where and how to sleep

Like a child's Crayola masterpiece
simplified to the point of colorful abstraction
any query presented literally: *where to go,*
where to spend the days and nights;
should I stay in a homeless shelter or my car
parked behind the monster trucks at Walmart?
can be reconfigured metaphysically
and the metaphorical offered to the stars
again: say sleepy-headedly *twinkle, twinkle,*
starlight, star bright, hoping
ruses in rhyme connect the dots.

The interstices between the starry pinnacles
may chart the image of a homeless man
sort of an exhausted yogi
proud how much self-knowledge he attains
testing the smallest spaces he can live inside.
Tonight then I'll drive until I find
shame inside a proper roach motel: humility, too,
between sleeplessness and first dawn light.

Darryl Lorenzo Wellington