

Feast

A yellow-jacket crawled across the window,
corner to corner. People would be arriving soon,
and I did not know what they would eat.
Some of the flowers may have been wilting,
there were clothes in small, folded piles
in nearly every corner. I had eggs, yes, and milk,
but that was not party food and it would take
pastry to make it so. Also bacon and Gruyere.

And the twinkle lights were nowhere to be found,
which I had planned to twine, lit, into glass bowls,
which were also nowhere to be found. But I heard—
a phone call—that a messiah was coming.
Downtown, in a hotel, you could buy tickets.
I left my labors to see him. Ticket in hand,
I turned to find him standing near me. Like a hologram,
his aspect shifted when he moved, or when I did.

Boldly, I tried looking in his eyes, because
I had been taught I could have his image
in my countenance if I tried to do good. I thought,
I want to see his eyes. But we were being ushered
into a room—very small, I thought, with a long table,
others seated already with their papers in hand.
I fished mine out of my bag, two copies only,
clearly not enough. The first woman read hers aloud,
a graceful sestina with no envoi. We waited
for the messiah to render his judgment before
venturing our own.

I left to make more copies.

The party at home went on without me,
people arriving to greet my children, sit on
clean folded laundry, nibble a forlorn cracker
in unfriendly lighting. Back in the room, the seating
had changed. I sat across from him. “I wish
you had been here—the last one was vintage you,
all about a vacation,” he said. *I want to see his eyes,*
I thought, but the warmth in them made
a physics of repulsion. Equal and opposite reaction,
I think. I knew he wanted to see my own papers.
I passed them to the left and right. A custard unmade,
a gathering unhosted, but my handmade
words were on the table. I could not say where

I should have been. At home, the glassine wings
of autumnal insects bore them to clusters
of cold grapes. Their many-sided eyes could not
discern the outside of the glass from the in.