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still looking for the perfect line

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still looking for the perfect line

(for jennifer)

I

Throwing chemical praises
to the aching night eye
and the clammy legs that spawn.

Staring at a green penny on the road:
closing in the dark to pick it up
and clamping down
for a taste of the luck
often held, or loved, or had.

Now Old Precision
begs for another reason
not to open the door for Joy:
he cries,
and paints his room
with concepts from the grit of cold copper,

then lies bitter
on the film of morning tongue.

The spinning coin is cast into the twilight,
winks, but invites no report of Fortune
or ever finding home.

II

The carmine blaze of the rising sun
rolls red
and stretches like a phoenix egg,
searing the disquiet capacities
that lie face down
on the empty field of mind.

The contorted sleepers
The crazed, summer burning—

She talked about a glass dragonfly
that can darn your ear to your head,
darting up
from a numb, blue haze

like a needle
humming above this mist-armed,
yawning lake.

here on the ferry,
it enters my body through the head—
words that tear and prod and numb the flesh
turning my stomach, those fallen
in absent fear.

My ears are stitched by resonance
then silence;
and I can hear the cicadae hum
of the creatures I spawned last night

and the chaste picture
in white that soared above
pinning me to the earth
through hips and arms,
legs.

III

The emptiness golden
the sun already above and beside;
the water regains its solidity,
and I've put the precision man
and the old dragonfly to bed.

She drives, and spares us the words,
and we are drained
the sleepers, too
by the violent nature of diurnal,
(solar) beginnings and ends.

The sun is still in the sky
until it bursts the field
where the sleepers awake
to look for coins, for doubt,
for music that is governed by
the aching night eye.

—ryan shafer '94