

Grace Marie Grafton

night was this huge kite I promised

- Bob Hicok

I promised you a good story.
I know. You're still waiting. I'm borrowing
worm language, giraffe tongue
and a time no clock can tell,
just to get you the first paragraph.
You're so patient.
The spider we allow to live in our bathroom
could help us both, there's this tangle of sticky
essence I'm having trouble with, trying
to coax it out nightly
from its hiding place in my
solar plexus, without waking
either of us from illusion.
I'm so afraid you won't like my story.
You'll say, 'It isn't good, it's unending, it doesn't
notice anything around it, it's the wrong
color, the wrong tempo and it doesn't have any
children or riddles or velvet hats.'

You won't see the night,
you won't recognize the kite.

the useful friction of part on part

-Jessica Jacobs

A hand against the redwood's shaggy bark,
the scratch of a stellar jay's call into air that was
minding its own business, the grind of the doe's teeth
against the persimmon leaf. And then there are the thoughts
that people don't want because they're like the rasp
of a match on the box's scratch pad and boom! con-
flagration, all their stored trash catches fire and it
hurts to be in flame, to endure the sight of their trash
in the light that won't let them look away. What is
truth? It's said that photographs show what's real but
objects, even people, can be 'arranged'. It's said
memory is faulty, what about the word 'selective', the word
'deny' or 'lie'? 'Rub your face in it' when someone purposely
alters the 'truth'. And what about the word 'survival',
or the words 'what you wanted to hear'? What about
'I wanted you to love me'?

Getting Late

Little did I know when I first became
mesmerized by downtown and its vacuum
of values or rivers or listening skills, that
night wasn't an exit but an elevator.
I wish I could bandage my badinage,
allow my laughter to stray, a dog after
scent. Forget the pearl necklace my mother
didn't leave me in the will, let the plaster
crumble, didn't I dream a house made
of leaves? I'm afraid of spring
but its urgency makes me fizz
in places where I sing like the finches.
I taste its obsolete menu,
I enter its terrible pity.

Rummage Sale

The mind tires, eyesight alters, maybe it was
the antibiotic drops, maybe the burly traffic cop
who, nonetheless, moved with a kind of panache
I might long to tuck back into my repertoire.

A taste for frenchified vocabulary. “Were you
born in a barn?” Actually, not far from and,
originally, I guess cows had been installed there,
though during my early days, it was a bogus barn,
just tools and anomalous items that wouldn’t fit
in the house. Great Grandpa’s original bottle capper,
now we no longer made sarsaparilla soda chez nous.

An expression my mother would never have used,
she didn’t even like to cook. Imagine the commotion
going on in a mind that felt forced to think all day
about a detested subject matter. Stoical.

A word I hate. Reading it in the philosophy course,
I gritted my teeth, tensed my thighs, rushed
to the phonograph to put on some hip-hop.

A more capacious modus operandi whirled in my
opera house, though barns devoid of livestock
can provide mystery and a sense of cogent brutality,
valuable preparation for world history and anybody’s
immediate necessity.

The Sign

Examine it from all angles. Look at it sideways and from the rear. If you can fly, view it from the top. Yes, I know you disdain flying, prefer travel by foot and there's something to be said for shambling along. It is what we're talking about, isn't it, multiplying the opportunities to peer closely at each new insignia, not to assume any detail in the overall doctrine? Shape, temperature, color and, especially, whether it breathes or not. Or at least, gives off a scent, doesn't seem to glaze over under lingering scrutiny. Does it have something to say? Do you have something to say to it? How about, "How long have you been here without my noticing you?" Or "Are you just a trick of the light?" After all, it is sundown, change is resident. Yes, I think its message may be, "Resilience," or "Don't take for granted anything's tenure." I think we might have to get inside it and that may take all night.

Grace Marie Grafton's most recent book, *Jester*, was published by Hip Pocket Press. She is the author of six collections of poetry. Poems recently appear in *Sin Fronteras*, *The Cortland Review*, *Canary*, *CA Quarterly*, *naturewriting*, *Fifth Wednesday*, *Basalt* and *Mezzo Cammin*.