

Millay at the Mall

J.T. Ledbetter

When she got on the escalator she noticed the man coming down
and smiled at him then jumped over the separator and into his arms

downstairs they sold coffee and rolls so she had a buttered scone and said it was stale
the manager came out and asked her what she knew about stale scones
and who was that man hanging out of her body
whose legs and arms and hats and dogs and cats and twin moons were those anyway

we can't have that said a security guard unless you show me your badge
she showed him and he smiled and disappeared into her eyes
when the band came down the center tooteling and thumping and asking
for money to send them to a parade in NY she squeezed up to the B flat
clarinetist and was quite good at it
people cheered but some led their toddlers away as she undressed him in mid-march

that night when the stores closed they looked for her in bedding and in lingerie and on
sofas and fold-up couches
but she was not there—she was upstairs in the men's department fondling fondling
neckties and cooing in the dark
“what fun...what fun... oh the men have all the fun...” and she tied fourteen together
with iambic knots...the store sold them all...men fell asleep wearing them because
their lives were going on under the ties now...she had done her work...the Mall is
boarded up

the men who live under the escalator rub their greasy hands together and intone:
“What lips my lips have kissed and where and why
I have forgotten...”



Something Different

Their children said to get out of Nebraska and do something different for your 55th anniversary, for god's sake, and showed

them a postcard of Buffalo Bill standing beside a windmill, so they went to Detroit Lakes in Minnesota and stayed at a place off the

highway with window air conditioning, which meant you opened your window, the woman said, and told them to come by the café

for some nice gooseberry pie. They unpacked their new suitcases and took a shower together but could not do more, and laughed so

hard the plastic shower door broke and some water got on the linoleum floor so they got down naked on their hands and knees with towels

and sopped it up then lay down still laughing on the bed. When the lady came by for supper they were still asleep so she winked at her

husband and put two pieces of pie in the fridge for later. The next morning they found them, naked on the bed, their hands touching, beneath the picture of Buffalo Bill standing beside a windmill.

