

Classic Poetry Series

Ioanna Carlsen

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Infanta

For a moment it flashed
through me, I thought I
remembered being someone before now,
the her who was me
hurt, felt,
embedded like a whorl in wood.
The photograph is black and white,
but I know the dress was amber--
she bells out toward me,
her fingers resting against
a cage of satin,
she stands the way I do
already--is that it--
or have I never forgotten how
to stand like her?

If I could just take the fire with me
into the next room I might sleep
and stumble into the black hole
of that photographer's studio,
back into the frame,
a wax doll, head and hands
emerging out of her costume,
like the infanta of Velasquez,
her future already in place,
maids-in-waiting, a dog, the dwarf,
everyone staring into a dream so dense
nothing ever escapes it.

Ioanna Carlsen

Over And Over Tune

You could grow into it,
that sense of living like a dog,
loyal to being on your own in the fur of your skin,
able to exist only for the sake of existing.

Nothing inside your head lasting long enough for you to hold onto,
you watch your own thoughts leap across your own synapses and disappear --
small boats in a wind,
 fliers in all that blue,
 the swish of an arm backed with feathers,
a dress talking in a corner,
 and then poof,
your body big as the world, your mind clean as a dog's,
 important with accident --
 blood or a limp, fur and paws.

You swell into survival,
 you take up the whole day,
you're all there is,
 everything else is
not you, is every passing glint, is
 shadows brought to you by wind,
 passing into a bird's cheep, replaced by a
 rabbit skittering across a yard,
a void you yourself fall into.

You could make this beautiful,
 but you don't need to,
living is this fleshy side of the bone,
 going on is this medicinal smell of the sun --
 no dog ever tires of seeing his life

keep showing up at the back door
even as a rotting bone with a bad smell;
feet tottering, he dreams of it,
wakes and licks no matter what.

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