

stephen collins

Christmas Eve

Plashlessly we dove into a biting December wind
she leading, and cut through the night
like sharks through black water.
Down Rodeo in stained levi's past
closed shops with store-front windows
full of jewelry, white fur, close-circuit TV,
we dreamt of money and what we'd buy
taste style class were her words
fluttering perpetual from lips, liquid red.
Most of all she said she wanted a Goodyear blimp
to say anything she felt in the sky
then they'd have to listen.
And I said into distracted eyes,
Isn't it interesting how peasants
used to go to Shakespeare plays and now
the rich go to plays and peasants watch TV?

I'm an arrogant son of a bitch sometimes
but only when the curtain's up, the stage is set.
How often do I get to see myself candid?
Only in a memory, maybe in a poem.

At home I dressed her in Christmas tinsel
whirled her in a garland of gold as she giggled,
stacked gifts at her feet. I planted a kiss
on her nose then swiftly to her lips
until she pulled away, always.
We dined on bananas and barbacue potato chips
by candle light smoking grass listening to
Beethoven while I faithfully wrote it all down
on the back of an envelope
so I could use it now.

Sometimes I think I hear the phone ringing
when I'm not home, while I'm walking away
she calls to me, voicelessly, as in a dream
and I can almost feel her fingers spread
through my hair to the back of my neck.
I reach out to hold the wind as it slips by
and end up hugging myself.