

KATHERINE NOBLE

Arias di Sorbetto

1

I have crossed the Judaic age of reason
twice now at twenty-four. Innocence interpreted
as a mere illusion of childhood—
a basic sleight of hand. Experience
like an appendage we find on our bodies
in the dark, then bury and revisit
and bury until the map is too worn
to unfold and follow.

In junior high a girl
grabbed my jeans out of my gym bag,
put them on, and paraded
around the court, telling classmates two of her
could fit in the pants. *Magic 8 Ball*,
will I be beautiful? I asked
over and over in my grandmother's basement.

During our weekly game of dominoes,
an old man urinated on the floor
then wept for it.
These are the things that kill us eventually.
Our organs respond to neurons wrapped in shame
through the decades—the effect cannot be ignored.
Kunitz claims desire makes the engine go. Shame
shuts down the motor mid-rotation.

2

Tiresias, why were you embarrassed
watching two snakes fuck?
Did the phallic wrestling conjure too much arousal
to witness without destroying them afterward?
Magic 8 Ball, *will I be beautiful?*
My childhood clairvoyant rolled its blind eye,
told me to concentrate and ask again.

Arthur Conan Doyle called on a medium
to contact his son, Kingsley, killed post-combat.
Tried hard not to die,
Kingsley communicated to the soothsayer.
Doyle strained to hear him through the thin
November air. Nothing.

She said Kingsley calls me dad,
Doyle recorded later in careful script, dying
to remember the medium's tête-à-tête
with his dead, holding hope
against reality: *That's good—*
but he always called me dadsy.
Tiresias takes off his sunglasses,
realizes he can see right in front of him,
and his breasts are leaking.

3

The empires of history are filled
with the shameless breasts of concubines.
They laugh and refill chalices, thumbing silks
with despondent eyes. Write miserable poems
in careful left-handed script. They do not want
freedom—that is a misunderstanding.
They want a fig tree
planted closer to the window,
a dove nesting. Albino peacocks.
Caramel cakes, hot oceans,
arias di sorbetto.

They want the men
to turn around one more time
as they walk away.
But these longings are common, private,
and not worthy of record. They repeat through the castles
of civilization. Dust, and the dust returns.

4

Linda Gregg told Jack
loving him was like being alive
twice. Her life large enough
to fit two people in its fabric
two times over. But as for me:
Both times a wall met me.
Both times, I was naked and ashamed.
Both times, I was most mesmerized
by the aria di sorbetto, sung to me privately
while everyone else waited in line for Champagne.

5

The Japanese reorganize
their wooden objects to instill small meaning.
The light lightens, and the moon is lassoed
when it tries to spin itself away.
C. is asleep for two more hours,
and I watch the morning catch dust
across the floor, hear him breathe, wait.

I saw something similar
in a barn once while feeding horses
at 5:30. As I stood knee-deep in hay,
listening to the mares and the Arabian hum,
I knew I could never explain the beauty to anyone—
the dusk was gold and ghostheavy, splitting
the mangers' planks like rapture—
the afternoon a painting no one will ever get right.