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HE
WIN
DOW
CLEANER
FOR THE TOWER
OF BABEL STREAKS
THE GLASS WITH BROAD,
CAUTIOUS STROKES, SPATTERING
THE LETTERS AND NUMBERS (WHICH
THE TOWER EXUDES LIKE SWEAT) THAT
ENCRUST THE PANES LIKE DISTORTED PEARLS
INTO HIS WASH-BUCKET WHERE HE FISHES OUT
THE ONES THAT HAVE FLOATED TO THE TOP
AFTER HE WRINGS, AND PUTS THEM INTO THE
POCKET OF HIS OVERALLS AS HE STEADILY
DESCENDS, THE PLATFORM SWAYING IN THE HOT
WIND, UNTIL HE CAN'T SEE THE SKY ANYMORE
THROUGH THE FOG AND HIS DIZZINESS
SUBSIDES AND HIS FINGERS TREMBLE EVEN
THOUGH HE IS BACK IN HIS QUARTERS NOW
UP LATE PLAYING BATTLESHIP AGAINST AN
OPPONENT HE DOESN'T KNOW AND CAN'T SEE
BUT (LIKE EVERY NIGHT) HE PLAYS ANYWAY,
DRAWING A LETTER AND A NUMBER FROM HIS
POCKET AGAIN AND AGAIN AND PLUGGING THEM
INTO THE GRID OF THIS AWKWARD, NEVER-
ENDING GAME WHOSE PROGRESS IS SLOW AND
DRAWN-OUT LIKE TRYING TO CONVERSE IN THE
ATMOSPHERE OF THE MOON, WONDERING ALL
THE WHILE WHO IS ON THE OTHER SIDE AND
WHERE HIS DESTROYER IS AND WHAT'S THE
USE OF SHOOTING IN THE DARK AND WHETHER
THERE IS ANY MEANING OR STRATEGY TO BE
GLEANED AT ALL FROM THE INTRICATE LATTICE
OF CHARACTERS BEFORE HIM WHICH LINGER IN
THE SCOPE OF HIS VISION EVEN WHEN HE
SHUTS HIS EYES, HE SEES THEM, FLOATING
ABOUT LIKE WHITE BLOOD CELLS, IN HIS
DREAMS, IN HIS TOMATO SOUP AND EVEN ON
THE SURFACE OF LIGHT BULBS JUST BEFORE
THEY GO ON AND HE WAKES UP FOR WORK,
STEADILY ASCENDS UNTIL HE'S HIGH ABOVE
THE FOG AND THIS TIME, JUST THIS TIME, HE
PRESSES HIS FACE TO THE GLASS AND PEERS
THROUGH INTO THE TOWER AND SEES
CHARACTERS, MILLIONS OF THEM, BILLIONS
OF THEM, ALL WRITTEN ON SHEETS OF PAPER
WHICH LITTER THE FLOOR IN INDISCRIMINATE
PILES, AND THEN HE ACTUALLY PEERS
CLOSER AND REALIZES THAT THEY AREN'T
CHARACTERS AT ALL, BUT HUMAN FACES.