

"Words' Worth" Poetry Readings

Poets at the Culture, Arts, and Parks Committee of the Seattle City Council.

theo 1 by Noel Franklin

theo

"what do you call a drummer without a girlfriend"

"what?"

i say

"homeless"

he says

and all smiles saturate biting irony

there being truth in that

i mean, how many girls do you see

waving their lovers off to work

while they sit content in their practice spaces

"johnny's gone, girls!"

let's get out the sticks and picks and distortion pedals!"

i'm not even in a band

i just do paintings

but we're all short of support, time, materials

all wishing we had rich relatives, like vincent van gogh

his life was not easy

still, if he needed anything to keep painting

he just wrote his brother

he wrote

"dear theo, send more yellow."

i think "of course!"

but i have no well off family

or drummer boy

with a garage practice slash studio space place to be

so, i've got one of those high-paying jobs

that women work out of desperation

i've got the body for it and the gear

i just move through rooms densely populated with men

while wielding my power tool of choice

in this case, a welding lead

because i am a welder

that's what i do for a living

long hours spent in the shop or shipyard

playing rosie the riveter to a modern day army

until crawling home to dream heavy dream

of welding, again

except this time i am arcing billboard size letters

until the entire naval refueler starboard side reads

"dear theo, send more yellow."

theo 2 by Noel Franklin

except the yellow never comes
i am losing track of what van gogh must have been seeing
the sky over seattle is starless and flat
raining a drizzle of gray over everything
my vision gray, my canvas gray
my whole world gray
enough to actually consider one of those desperate jobs
putting my mind on hold and body on lease
but when i imagine myself as a dancer
the image i conjure
is me, in my welding leathers
stomping my boots on the foot of the stage yelling

"dear theo, send more yellow!
dear theo, send more yellow!"

and the men
who pack razzmatazz or dejavu or the lusty lady
they say
"we understand
you don't have a brother
who sends you money for your paintings"
so they start a collection
write checks for a trust fund
have me to dinner with their families one night a week
it's all on the house
the doors are thrown open
the room fills with sunlight and smiling cacophony
women and children start filing in
each one with instruments
it's like the whole seattle band scene starts playing
with full orchestra
and the odd homeless drummer
the welders serenade secretaries
and i am living a version of "it's a wonderful life"
still in my leathers
blissfully crowd surfing
held by hands, hearts
voices, unison, chanting

"dear theo, send more yellow
dear theo, send more yellow
dear theo,
send
more
yellow"

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