

We Were Glowing Dark Inanimates

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And in all that time I was watching something still be still and something named be named inside a syntax that was the shape of a narrow channel; I was watching stillness itself sit in a defining stillness, in a radiant enactment of holding still and waiting, of being pinned and waiting, of being sculpted as something open and curved, something tapered and painted and stained and heated, something stripped and set to stillness, moving only when moved, still even when so, still even when. I was watching something be still even when moving and I saw a syntax try to carry it and felt space cut around it, and I saw the day unfold. I saw someone open the curtains, then close them. I saw someone pour a glass of something and drink it while pacing the light; it was another day of radiant inaction. It became a series of radiantly inactive days. You were being held inside and time had become something measured by something being drunk, and something pacing inside something solid and opaque, the wood of the house eroding but holding back the light and water of the outdoors, yet letting in the small animals, the varied insect life. And this was how still it was inside the narrow syntax that was the flow of something waiting being defined by its own curving, shaped by another, named by. It was in a holding pattern and was holding and being held by being named and was so still the day passed through it and light refracted off it and made shadows on the floor and on the back of the person waiting also, waiting to be named or renamed, waiting to mask or unmask, waiting to be safe or held, to breach the town, to cross the threshold of the door. Such that between the person and the stillness was a use not being tended to; each entity in that place had something it was becoming but also was still patterned by something it was leaving. You were never just new or just made; you came from something. I was a composite of elements and had been standing in front of the door for a long time, wondering what was happening in the world and to the world, and behind me were several other shaped elements forged from elements not present, and we were all sitting in a kind of ink—written on but also capable of writing. I wanted to be someone who could build despite rarely going outside; I wanted things that were teeming with darkness lit from inside, bright from non-knowing, and for these things to hold space and cut space while buildings were going up and days were passing.

It was easy to turn around and see their stillness; it was impossible to catch them in motion. We were all expected to be in motion because that was how time moved and how success was measured: you were getting on an airplane, you were walking the streets of a city, you were meeting people in a bar, signing your name to things, you were racing through the night with your care and your use, presenting yourself to others, to another, everybody reading each other's quick views—this is how I work, this is what I do—then walking off together. There was a lot of movement inside of something not moving. Inside the body waiting for the world was something radiant and silent. It was elemental and pressured for action; it was something ancient with something teeming inside of it; it was something named next to something teeming; it was teeming slowed by being named and put to care. It was a rounded rough; it was a hard, flat extended: it was fired and cooled

and left for a decade. It was dug up and scraped then fired. It was something hard and curving; it was something ancient and set to use and was inside you. Dark glowing memories. It was something glazed. It had a glaze that made what was moving inside it still; things were happening on the exterior side of being a dark animate glowing. You were set to roam sitting inside something set for use.

I picked up a ceramic cup and pulled from it until it was empty then replaced it. Everything was bright. I picked up a bowl; I picked up a wooden spoon and set it in the bowl; I placed the bowl and spoon onto a flat, smooth surface that stood twenty-nine inches above the floor then I sat down on something soft about eight inches below my bowl. I waited: someone was bringing something. Someone was cooking something to bring, so I waited with these ancient entities. I was an ancient entity borrowed by space for time. Waiting here, glowing darkness. I was waiting and time was unfolding, and I had a name that held me in place; I had my care and my use. I was something still sat inside something still, waiting for something hot. Someone was crossing the floor with something hot, and we were in a kind of choreography of objects revealing and suppressing their care and use. It was a strained and radiant inaction of elements fired and glazed into stillness but moving even so. It was a day of doing things with and next to objects that were fired and glazed, that were sanded and scraped and painted. Everything I picked up I also counted. Everything was clay; everything was iron. There were rims and handles all over the world, too many to count. Everything was glass: there were flutes and bubbles; there were cracks and sealant. Everything was marble. Things were slightly amethyst in color. Everything was wood; everything was ivory. Things had come through silver. Everything was bronze. It was a collection of pressures. Everything was cast; everything was set to mold, was curved and molded, and as the elements were bent to care something went quiet in everything. You couldn't have some parts of the space be quiet without other parts taking on quiet, too. You couldn't be animate among inanimate entities and be at your fullest: you had to wait for the world; you had to write and wait and take on names in this choreography. I agreed to live among the things I put to use and saw where I went still around them. I said it in a poem. I said it in a drawing. I said it in the shirt I wore. I could tell the difference. I knew when it was an ancient entity and when it was new construction. I waited for the iron to ring. I hit the tuning fork against the clay pot. I called out "pen, pen, brush, pencil, pen" as I moved my eyes across my desk. The months never passed fast enough: you crept out after dark to walk the driveway. I came back in and said "eraser"—I'd forgotten it. I said "paper, paper, wood, table, wood." I said, "pigment, metal, metal, metal." Nothing moved. I sat at the long expanse and said, "hot, hot, warm, hot" and needed something cooling. Blueberries were objects. They sat in the ancient entity. I said, "bowl." I said, "bowls" and "cupboard." It was getting late. The wine had been chilling. I said the syntax of the thing: "Let's pour the wine in the glass"; "Let's put the plates on the table."

These were wares. This was their use. Yet emptying a glass of the wine it held brought the glass no closer to me than did my saying "glass" or having a thirst for the wine in the first place. We were glowing dark inanimates, straining on our respective stages, and this was grammar. This was what was left of being gathered. This was attention and consumption.

This was the back of, the through, the still. This was what curved, what rimmed and covered. The glaze made me glow and become very slightly amethyst in color and begin to see other things go amethyst around me. I saw amethyst in the line between the town and the door, amethyst around the windows, on the lampshades, coating the filaments, amethyst on the stairs leading to the loft, amethyst in the vessel by the bed, in lying down to rest, in counting mornings.