

WILLIAM STOBB
FIRST PLACE

A Moment for Authentic Shine

This is the greatest moment of your life,
said the voice both familiar and distant, like a childhood
friend become spokesperson for a cleaning product—
which caused the many hats to turn in many directions
and one robed arm to extend.
And what after all had been passing?
The sounds birds made often seemed more cogent
than the swirl of argument, a cyclone in a sandbox.
So much management we ought to have degrees
was a type of joke made at outmoded parties.
Still with shades and declarations
echoes of heroic solos translated out of urgent decades
while almost unnoticed, pensive tunes accumulate in the mix
like thunder clouds on these warmer days. Regardless,
the names come unpinned, stars die, a closetful of semi-
recognizable jackets and hats be-speaks
the by-gone, and yet the baffling rekindling of romance
may justify the maintenance of a hairstyle.
A certain heart medication—no, I was afraid to say
a certain heart, beating in the chest of a certain girl.
To say heart in that trite way, and girl when by now she's fifty,
and certain when the elapsing of all things into void
has been made abundantly clear. But I knew her
and she seemed real, and at thirty still childlike—
a trait adorable in women, rather of concern in men
say the conservatives but look who's ogling
the ballplayers around the pool table.
Any slogan invites rebuttal and a spin
into personal views often doubles futile conversation.
One might live consuming nothing
but packaged goods and still in that moment

of late afternoon crash—over-heated, nauseated
by persistent sexual memory, blinded by sun, buffeted by wind
—unfairly rely on that prideful sense of authenticity
so prized in our time that it could be said to float,
invisible of course, above a century's worth of steaming wrecks—
cloud of elemental and reckless
identity unwarranted, silver-lined illusion of nobility—
until geographies choke in the torrent,
shrines assembled from knick-knacks manufactured
by prisoner children dissolve
and in our true magical forest, blossoms
wreathed by small creatures that worked
in tandem with our spirits become
as we become atmosphere.