

POETRY/FICTION

Poem

An exquisite presence (*after* Buber)

That time when we sat naked, unfolded and laid bare,
The truth of our existence was all we had to wear.
Washed clean by every silence, in the realm of our between,
We walked along the Narrow Ridge,
Then returned to where we'd been.

And as I walked away from you, my eyes in downcast gaze,
Cocooned from the constant bustle of an intrusive outer-maze,
The silence of our conversation, still singing in my ears,
Bidding me not to speak, nor think, nor engage,
With triumphs, tears or rage.

In this translucent moment,
I willed to stay sublime,
Seduced by tongues of silence,
Suspended, to float in time.

*A soap bubble,
The product of your gentle sighs,
Evanescent,
Floating as a perfect transparent sphere,
Cleansed of all flesh,
Dancing weightless, iridescent in soft shafts of light,
On every uplift of an imperceptible breath of air;
Secure in its own solitude, and its resplendent beauty
Within the tightness of its skin.*

*Yet filled with constant terror,
Too fragile to be touched,
Too exquisite to do anything,
But to float, and to be.*

An image of me.

And as I reached the elevator, a colleague bid me well,
I looked up, reluctantly cursed.
The soap bubble had burst.

A presence, now set free.

—John H. Kearsley
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