

## LETTER TO THOSE WHO WANTED ME

to choose truth over dare. Self-disclose  
for once. Give anything, a barbed fluke, a chain

tongue of a buckle, enough for them to claim,  
*I know her. She is mine.*

Me. Always opting to kiss the cis girl, never holding  
fast. Tagging her lips as if a hot pot, hardly

a blink. Just enough to satisfy the dare, the boy  
forever asking me to strip and streak even

though my deft undress-dress celerity—perfected  
in junior high locker rooms—long ago evolved

into a moonlit self-evasion, polished in pretense.

But no one wants to be left suffocating  
in the polluted orchards of this valley: the earth everywhere

brown and aching. So, older now, I long  
to unmoor myself, disassemble my semblance,

to imagine I never left Jess Johnson's game room  
without answering questions about ejaculations,

virginity mislaid, sexual partners, and other regrets.  
I would've told you I'd never fake an orgasm.

I would've shared the stale story about the back seat  
of somebody's mother's Camry. Spectators

sneering round the windows. I would've told you  
how many sexual partners: enough,

and the only celebrity crush I've ever had—  
*Frank O'Hara*. Odd, but true. Because starseeds,

because a brittle desire  
to land. Because Alice Neel painted his portrait

not once, but twice. Because the body  
is a place in which the city squats and tarries.

Because I've never faked an orgasm—  
except when drunk. I would've told you

I should but don't  
regret trying to OD on my mother's heart pills

at age sixteen. I slept five days straight and it was absolutely  
fabulous. I would've said *Frank O'Hara*. Because

he “had so much grace, that man,  
even through all the delirium and agony.” Because sex

is a common denominator. Because humans  
do things like release all the British birds

cited in Shakespeare into Central Park. Because you wanted  
the truth: I would've liked to kiss her harder. Longer.

To splay myself agape. To open in slow motion  
everything a body has to offer. Hers. Mine.

Middled bare in the coed dare circle—a cadaver peeled  
and pinned—authenticating the thrust and gut inside us all.

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The quoted material—“had so much grace, that man, even through all the delirium and agony”—is attributed to Willem de Kooning.