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Origin Story (With Frank O'Hara)

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ORIGIN STORY (WITH FRANK O'HARA)TANA JEAN
WELCH*How it begins:*

Easily. Jane said, "Meet me in the park /
if you love me." And I boarded that jet, a jade
bracelet binding paper flowers, no longer bound
to any man. For seven hours bodies
below curved and curled against
each other: hills, hills. Craters, rivers,
lakeshores in lush lines. Crop circles
kissing waterwheels, dunes enveloping dunes
in a soft chain across the continent. And the earth's
pliable sinuosity where the plane landed:
I went straight to Golden Gate Park and sat
near the Japanese Tea Garden, the pagodas
a perfect backdrop for her entrance.

∞

How it was:

An afternoon, all of us crafting our art.
I said to my husband: "Meet me in the park /
if you love me." And he did. Same as always:
bandstand, mouth full of tombstones,
a jagged granite smile, ghosts of martyred Quakers
skimming the Frog Pond. The Boston Common
was very common. But still, there's something
to be said for Galatea and Acis' eternal love spitting
from Brewer Fountain. Even if Acis
was crushed by a boulder in the end.
I said meet me and he did.

∞

How it is:

In one of the cities I walk
 past the Dairy Bar and the public library,
 its seven windows awash in obsolescence
 and paper fliers. Then into Maurice's
 Fine Chocolates to buy a balsamic
 for Timothy, a Mexican spice for Kara.
 Out front I spy a sparrow importing
 toxins from one neighborhood
 to the next—wire, skin, metallic stems. A paper
 scrap, and scrawled across its dirty creases:
 "Meet me in the park / if you love me."
 Suddenly we were millions
 upon millions breathing this air
 but not a one of us could answer
 which park? what kind of love?

∞

How it begins:

Frank O'Hara listens to Prokofiev surrounded
 by sheets of paper, teacups, and scotch
 in Norman Bluhm's studio, on Park Avenue South.
 On one of the sheets Bluhm splats black, illustrating
 the opening theme's pizzicato strings. But the poet writes
 through this splashy gesture: "meet me in the park /
 if you love me." Again the painter blots black
 across a sheet of paper. The poet writes "apples /
 light / fires / dances." Point and counterpoint,
 each moves in its own medium. Paper after paper
 tacked on the studio walls, the poet prints
 through the paint "this is the first person / I ever
 went to bed / with." The painter smears gouache over
 "Help! I am alive!" and twenty-six sheets later
 the sonata stops. The two men look
 out the window, down to the park below,
 and no one is coming. ♪