

# Exile

Margot Schilpp

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Arc of a petal falling,  
                                    arc of a playing card  
  arc of whale's fin or  
                    monarch wing,  
curve of beach  
                            where tropical crabs  
                            come alive in the sand's sultry heat.  
Waves and palm fronds sing,  
  strategize: it's paradise  
when the frame obstructs  
                            the remnants of an experiment gone all to hell:  
                            hollows or memory  
                    absorb secrets and lie,  
fallow, in the mists of a garden where you could once give  
                    or bravely take the news:  
                            *I'm bankrupt, but can tell the story.*  
Once . . .  
                    . . . revelation . . .  
                                    . . . and then . . .  
  . . . revelation . . .  
                    . . . denouement . . .  
                                    I'm sitting in the third row, breathing  
  lightly, saving air.  
This morning, the painted  
                                    lanes change into rivers, nails, cats poised  
                            in attack stance. Whatever's walking down  
                            the sidewalk toward you  
whispers past, but I am possessed  
by reason:  
                            death a coin we spend  
                            just once  
and no currency to buy fidelity,  
                            even blessed  
                                    all night, when so much music passes,  
                            there may be another  
you choose  
                            to adore.  
Leave it to the experts—don't try  
                            this at home.  
  I have felt every bone, which ones  
                            are weakened by beauty.  
                            No detail not worth applause

in the dark, and lately  
                                 mangoes in my dreams.  
 Lately, spicy food,  
                                 ribbons braided in my hair,  
                                 accoutrements weighing me down  
 so I don't float away.  
                                 Some mornings,  
   I'm thinking fireworks, a Lear jet  
 to Paris for lunch with Karl or Paloma, a brief  
 walk up the Left Bank to look at art, really look  
                                 at what other people's eyes  
   are telling their minds they see:  
 the impulse guided down the arm  
                                 and out the hand, in a smudge  
                                 of gray or blue or pink,  
   nearsighted love of drama  
 and cathedral, fog lifting,  
   the river's sleepy turns  
 and meanderings  
                                 past stone bridges, brown  
 wrought iron that outlines balconies  
   and windows, all  
   of this wanting  
   to be color or light,  
 from the scallop  
                                 along the hands  
   and from the contours  
   of the mouth,  
   that ask *which of the shapes,*  
                                 *which of the colors,*  
                                 *which of the details,*  
*will you choose*  
                                 *to represent*  
*what's chosen you?*  
                                 Paint me into the corner—  
   abandoned warehouse,  
                                 goldenrod field,  
                                 thistle-covered hills—I don't care  
 if I'm only a shadow,  
                                 as long as I think I'm there.