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The First Photographer

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The First Photographer

Nothing seems far from this imprecision,
a dismantled privacy,
one man's view. The first photographer, idling
at an upstairs window, invented a freedom
from the backstreet he must have loved
even as it resisted all ownership. His half-shut eyes
must sometimes have blurred things just as the camera did,
perspective becoming the time light takes
to touch an object incompletely,
without any jealousy: floating in nature,
these images won't be fixed.

What he chose in these shadows
was not a recognition but a loss
of focus, a moment let go beyond itself
where buildings stretch outside the camera's scope.
I look for a way to feel
about his view, about anything.
Occasionally a hot stillness drenches my own windowsill,
the blue vase, the small giraffe emerging
clumsily from its mottled wood.

When this moves into that, I try taking it
lightly: if I sit here long enough,
everything changes. The sun is so careful
not to remember or neglect each detail separately.
Nothing will prevent me from moving
toward another, transfigured emotion
I haven't learned yet,
toward all the simplicity I've thought about,
toward my thoughts,
until exhaustion,
until the moment.