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Nick's Balcony, Brickell Key

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NICK'S BALCONY, BRICKELL KEY

I

Why couldn't I have willed the sudden
concentricity of waves in Biscayne Bay

so that now, pond-like and registering
the drop of a stone against the calm,

the tear and shove of the natural world
could seem the locked effect of need?

Instead, I linger four stories above
and beneath another three, tiered like

cube-edged crystals scored with Babylon rims
of succulents and ixoras mingling in the hang

against the harbored wind. We face the city
across a proper arm of sea, cleanly bridged,

the windows lit like trays of costume jewelry.
O *Araby* who broke the pubescent heart by shutting

down and haunts every proof of odyssey, you've cast
your net most certainly among the faded

exiles of this child-heavy, memory-broken place.
But they do not know or dare to turn

and know the elision that subverts them.
Let thirst be the hero of this hour and glass

indoctrinated shore that counts itself
with calipers of Either, for there is no greed

like that of panhandled rivers or the cracked tomb,
and who but the vibrant amid the groomed options

can flourish here? But I digress long enough
to let the freaky centered waves dissolve

the Bay into familiar nervousness, a quilt
of calm dark stains hard-edging the crackling

banners of halogen-peppered crests. This is the law
of temperature upon liquid masses but likewise

the fruit of chance for the data-frivolous eye
that takes its seeing seriously. Hence poetry and Both.

II

We came, by sheer desire, from a sunken nation
to frequent the surviving shore, to joke and revel

and gather from the fast hunters how to master
naturalness. Amid the shifting dunes, the strewn

algae, we made the mirror of this city rise.
A lawyer's office balcony upon the Bay facing

the tinker-toy skyline where more belief than profit
is made. I have a cubalibre in hand, the other sleeve

correctly angled into the blazer-draped pocket.
I am surrounded by fellow children of an epic—

though they are a decade younger, still its echo.
They are the peasants of the seeming urban scape,

content to feast on nibblings the abacus culture
throws to them. Its interests are theirs, though

they would reject the thought outright and claim
an impossible Cubanity. Still, they could not be mistaken

for men and women of desperate straits, haggard
from a flight from mask. On the lawyer's balcony

I am more of them than not. Despite the weighing
with which I flatter my distances, of them I am and stay.

III

I too have borrowed Cuba by the tome,
glass-eyed my national emptiness, configured

the cosmetic data, studied the licensed pose.
It is a Cuban matter, so the cherished story goes,

to be so from another's balcony, behold the schooners
and cigarette boats, the flagrant fill of canvas

and the cleaver's foam, and think a sailing beheld
is a sailing undertaken. Explorer, but to the bench

of your mind get working and never stop, anvil
and hammer, or is it the tanner's indigence

of stretch and hue, the curing enterprise
by which a little longer in the grave a memory

prolongs itself? But these are not or ever will be
mine. Memory like little Perseus on Danae's raft

sleeps deeper into infancy while his mother,
damned by beauty and prophesy, harries out

the course of winters and gales. Before lie
the chance monsters and other proofs, but none

will return me or these other simply younger lost
to the cradle of native purpose. No welcomes.