

Delmore Schwartz Vigilant Among Large Headed Lilacs

It is a scent that's tracked through mountain mist
down to the hillsides and the Jersey coast...
All your friends organized loosely
against you, huddling
there like the fat headed flowers
nodding in their little disagreements
like boxes of soap and cereal
in the borrowed shopping cart with a broken wheel.
The hobo's acquisitions, at dawn, and you wanting
to remember what consolation
in men's magazines Proust
passed to Swann
with the Paris barbers shaking large aprons
full of human hair and teeth onto the streets.

You repeat
something about 'small frogs in small ponds'
and the editor from the *Partisan*
adjusts her left shoulder and brassiere
and you noticed only the steam
rising from the winter sewer.

You told her you were not confused
but that she might have been dead
for some months now. *From*
the head up is what you were thinking.

You said *if you're going to*
shoot me—make it any day but Tuesday.

The astrologer's great Cross written in sand
with a stick of poison sumac
and the smoking innards of lambs. An augury
of black tea and gun powder.
Your dearest friends have always harbored
the darkest thoughts against you
and your empty bowery cupboards.

So what, dead from the neck down, is what
you said to *the Ex...* about yourself.

How you were becoming silent, athletic
while signing with your hands. The vowel
of thumb and first finger

from the second baseman to the catcher
while he's rising from the knees, throwing
off his mask, spinning clockwise, dust
like mummy bandages around him, the head
way back, looking up and homeward,
cleats pivot on the sack...
You told her to fuck-off, much too
complicated for most of us,
the crowd now silent and the stitched ball
falling into the grandstand
for the paying customers and their miniature children.