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Wordless

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Wordless

William G. Feeler

"Men never talk about feelings," you told the sales clerk.
"They can talk for hours about sports or the weather or sex.
Most don't even have any vocabulary for feelings." "Yeah,"
She answered, "I think they think too much—*sometimes*
I think they think too much. Sometimes they don't think
At all. 'Oh, I didn't think—' they say. But what drives
Me crazy is when I ask a man about his feelings and he
Just sits there like the Lincoln Monument—saying nothing.
'What are you thinking?' I ask. 'Nothin'.' And I say
'No, really, what are you thinking?' And he answers,
'Nothin'—just nothin'.' How can you think nothing?
Here's this man who can argue about Joe Montana
Or the stock market or Gorbachev till Jesus comes back—
Go on for hours—but his brain stops altogether when I
Mention feelings." "Yeah," you said, "I know what you mean."

Last night the stars were in your hair, and your eyes
Were diamonds. You left the table to freshen up,
And I breathed in from the wake of your leaving
Enough perfume to drown all thinking. Later, as we danced,
I felt our two hearts beating. That's not so easy
To put into words, it's all been said before.
I just said "I love you" and you answered, "I love you too"
And, crushing velvet against me, kissed me into oblivion.



This morning you were laughing with a man I'd never seen,
Remarking about the pleasures of a really fine wine.
When I walked in, you handed me a half a smile
And went on. He left, and you walked out wordless for coffee,
Bringing me a cup. Setting your coffee on the desk, you sat,
Crossed your arms, crossed your legs, away from me.
"What's wrong?" I asked. "Nothing—just a lot to do today,"
You answered, then carried on with small talk about the cat,
Susan down the hall, a Filipino vegetable market owner.
Like a pot boiled and cooled with the lid on you were—closed.

There is a fish that uses its tongue to mimic a worm
So as to catch and eat other fish, a plant that mimics
The markings of a deadly spider so as to keep away its predators.
So scientists say. And then there's you.

Today you treated me like a water snake. Tonight you want
To know if I love you, only you. I do not answer.
I do not answer fast enough. Feelings are all I have—
Tongue of fish, spider, fooled fish—who am I?
These images go through my mind, and I'm aware
Of their lack of sense. Do I love you? Do you mean 'tonight'?
Or do you mean always? Will you swallow me if I go for the bait?
Did I love you last night, with the stars and diamonds
I don't remember where? When your voice was a balm
And your words a strand of Debussy? Do I love you?

I almost answer, and you ask again and then answer for me.

