

When Called

Leslie Haynes

A busker starts. Melt with You. Modern English. Transports you to a crowded room with sticky floors. A glass in hand. Swaying. Spilling. Yelling out lyrics to faces yelling those lyrics back to you. *I saw the world crashing all around your face.* Spinning possibilities. With everyone. With no one. Caught in a time riff that is heavy, heavy, heavy on the drums. This is what the spirit wants. Abandon. Stomping. Free fall. Never mind the ruined dress and pounding head. It's synchronicity. Volume cranked.

Your name is called for a passport check. The last-minute flight. You, still humming the chorus. Undercover punk to the rescue. *A pilgrimage to save this human's race.* You told your sisters that it is not sustainable. None of it. Stating the obvious. This here-and-gone life. So you must take a good, long look. Right now the Olympics are clear on your left across the Sound. Over the Cascades. Mount Baker straight on. The long stretch of the Okanagan before you drop down into Kelowna.

He's asleep when you find him. Noble head. Shaggy halo of hair. The curve of cheekbone. You gentle to him, a quick caress of his arm. His surprise. You! The blue of his eyes. Wet grief of gratitude. Here. Now. Right now. Pain and relief. If you could just get that cup. Move a pillow. Adjust the blanket. You reach and pour and shift. It's all you can do. Too little. But everything. Eyes on him. Beholding. He drifts. Remember Gabriola? The tide pools. We never could keep track of you. He sleeps with you perched at his feet. Still holding your hand. You find his pulse. Watch over him. Frozen in place. That knitted brow, furrowed. Just like your own. *Trapped in the state of imaginary grace.*

Days later, when he's using a walker, you make a ritual of sitting outside after dinner. From the benches, you catch a thin sliver of lake and a sail or two. He names the park where he wants his ashes spread. Kalamoir. Talks about walking Reggie and Vip and Gus and Willy along the path. When was the last time? Oh, yes. Before the move. He waited on the beach with the dogs while you swam. Now he exaggerates your distance in miles. Says that you have the build and drive to be an Olympian. Present tense. You gaze at all that water and see you will always be his potential. *The future. Open. Wide.*



Modern English

"I Melt With You"

After the Snow

05/1982

4AD