

Ghost Villa

I retired to the villa of our blueprinted dream
on a roadless isle in the Gulf of Mexico, Florida's coast just beyond
sight, except on clearest days. Today, workmen have finished
the stone wall that rims the four acres my surgeon's art has earned:
these grounds and pond I call my own—artifact in the making.
As they walk off toward the ferry dock, I play *Love Supreme*
and its horn waking up fills the living room and investigates the sunset.
Of sweetheart trinkets stored in a wooden drawer
with heirloom knickknacks, I'm the sole map.
Even the best island detective could not
unpuzzle that the Mayan rug tacked up
above the beige sofa where I lounge
is the sole relic from our thirty-year's marriage
when I sold the house after Mara died.
I think of the twin willows on our street, shading
out the news with shadowy hues. I watch them
in my mind again, like a controlled explosion
glimpsed from a gin-and-tonic bunker,
fortified with a nightcap of neat vermouth.

Well, these ailments are routine. I walk at will
in a wave-combed sun. I could've been sentenced
to some planned community, wearing a provisional name tag.
The nursing home is out there like a shark
that has swallowed so many of my patients one by one.
My jazz goes *tum-tee-ta, tee-ta-tum*,
like Thelonious Monk taking a phrase lighter
than dropped pennies across a piano to groan
with veteran's moans. I have been wandering
the house again, talking to the moon
through my reflection in the living room window.

Enough . . . a postcard on the foyer's writing desk,
beneath the medieval monk paperweight
from my son John—'his knee is doing well'—
beacons for a response in the room's aglow bubble.
(Well, how can I ditch this retiree's crown,
even if *would* sours to *wasn't* in my hands?
I used to tell patients: Confide to heal. Then
maybe I should dash back home to slow dance
in good old Clearwater to those hard-to-hear torch songs?)

Especially on nights of soliloquies to glass,
I need the sympathy of astronauts to fall asleep.