

Standing and Understanding

(A True Story)

She stands up slowly, gathering her courage.
The one before had shown off his body
to loud music, flashing lights dazzling the crowd.
Now it is her turn to undress.
She can already hear their laughter.

I sit silently, gathering my courage.
Can I find the words to help her see
how beautiful she is, that soft lyrics
touch the gentle people; the rest
may be safely disregarded?

She stands at the mike unzips
her skin reaches beneath the left
breast, takes out her heart
and holds it up for us to see—thus
explaining the reason why she
cannot allow herself to begin weeping.

I unzip my mind, allow her images
to burrow in. Had I died in childbirth this
is what I would have missed.

I walk up the stairs, remembering
how she smiled when I told her,
mouthed a "thank you" that glistened
in her eyes, realize that my heart
has been liberated from the tears
it was wrapped in as the evening began—
having recovered the reason
all of our hearts continue to beat.

She walks up the stairs.
The memory of a smile, glistening
eyes, soft words, and unzipped skin
remain my only link to what
she might be thinking.

Steve Bloom
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