

BOB HICOK

An artist's statement

In the diorama of solitude, I'm the lone yak
forever surrounded by wolves, trying to make it
to the shimmering river of tin foil
that conveys a quality of motion,
like all beautiful things. Simultaneously,
I'm the god-creator who knows the wolves
will never get me, I have time to think
the reaching of stars will accumulate
into a cup of light some lucky sailor
gets to carry as a signal to the rest of us
to sleep well and dream that every
pair of pants comes with a harmonica
in the pocket. Those are my day jobs.

When not putting food on the table, I whistle
the part of a flute in a band on a bus
late at night, playing to spoiled burger wrappers
and the moon, to keep the heart company
in its banging against the pipes.

People who make things
have more interesting junk drawers
than people who don't miss
eating crayons, when long past bedtime,
the tongue still behaved like little
green fish in little yellow windows
in a little orange house the fish could leave
whenever they wanted, but stayed

Unto the breach

After five days of hydrocodone for kidney stones,
five days I didn't bathe, read the Magna Carta,
or poop, a man reached in and emptied my rectum,
one of the greatest kindnesses ever shown me,
so civil, I expected to look up and see him
in a tux, headed out to hear or even meet
Philip Glass, creator of "Music in the Shape
of a Square," which I listen to with stubbornly
loopy ears, and cried softly through my thank yous
as he did so, like rain that wants to remain
on the grass, to fall no further from the sun
than the tip of every blade, the top of all
that green reaching toward the future,
the dream I've been having and asking my body
to share, the boat of me I keep wrecking, the room
I never asked to enter and will only leave once,
what other metaphors fail to capture the truth
of anything, let alone the fact of home, the shape
I hold but am not, the matter I've borrowed
but mutter on about as my own, as if I possess
any of the roses I've ever given your hand
to marry for as long as beauty pretends to want us

The roots of geometry

It was just a lump of fat
below my wife's nipple. Thank god
I didn't have to text people
the news of a scalpel. Not like B.
for H. "Out of surgery. Doing fine."
Not like C. for L. S. for S.
Add an O—SOS: save our sisters.
I have four of those. My mother
is the author of eight breasts.
None of my sisters
have the philosopher's taste
for martyrdom, the mechanic's taste
for oil, the aerialist's taste
for release from the dress
of gravity. But they all have bodies
and have entered the time
of lessing: anyone I touch
can touch the person next to them—
next in age, next in love—
and be only one further touch away
from a scar. What a weird
game of tag. I prefer
when a stream touches a river
touches a watershed touches an ocean,
not the one we came from
but so much like it, who cares
to split hairs. Just a glob of fat.
Still, I'm picturing cutting
and wincing. Picturing hands
handing over and over
pieces of my wife's life
that have been unlifted.
Is imagining an amulet
against happening? Do we repeat
what we fear until it's as small

and comforting as a baby's rattle
in our heads? A friend
feels her flesh not being there,
ghost breasts she wonders
if a ghost child suckles.
I picture the nothead
bent to the notmilk and still
turn away, build a tent
in my own thoughts
for them both of privacy.
The first intimacy. How did the circle
find us? Mother and child.