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Welsch: On Freaking Out

ON FREAKING OUT

Gabriel Welsch

Because I wanted to fully embody
the possible, I split into two. As if
that were enough. For an evening,
I became the person who invented
the knock-knock joke. I stepped out
as the woman who first said *oh my*
to something other than a prominent
forehead. Then, I rehearsed soliloquies
of a fire alarm, learned the dance steps
of crash landings, pretended either one
mattered. I chain-smoked courtesy
and thought only of my other selves.
I sought the options, the power of might,
the satin lure of what-might-have-been,
the purchased decency of if-only-I-hadn't.

I once knew how to walk into a room
wearing only my face or a jacket tailored
for fat and angry. I used to understand
answering a phone meant variations
on *what-if*. I used to walk as a fist
until the ache of constant clench burned.
I saw a town as a warren of traps,
building tops as launch pads for a liberation
dive into forgiving earth.

Where is my other half? On what sugar
does he step, what trodden contradictions
reblossom to die once more, wilt
and wither, crisp for a lack of water's
clean infusion?