

The Observers

By Glenn Currier

Standing in line waiting for the restroom
we chuckled together about standing in line
for the restroom off the Interstate.
We enjoyed the friendly exchange
about what we knew about each other's home towns.
Then she spoke her beliefs about the environment
and his smiles were gone
face rigid as if he were experiencing pain
and each of us carved out our piece of turf
on the environmental battleground.

Now no longer bathing together
in the sparkly and lovely waters
of light conversation
we became observers,
suddenly aware
of the coldness of the water
how reddish around him and bluish around her.

The shift of feelings
and the gears of the mind
were so sudden it was shocking
as if we had abruptly been pushed out of an airplane
where the air was heavier
and breathing shallower.

We were now out of the realm of the warm and friendly
and into the strained arena of ideology.
Now no longer enjoying each other's tone of voice
and personal details that could be a door to friendship
we each crawled into separate boats
moving away from each other.

What if the topic had not come up
what if I discovered that we were distant cousins
that her illness the same one mama had
what if we decided to have coffee together
and lingered spinning out and stepping into the terrain
of each others lives?

What short circuit of understanding
happened in that moment when we became observers

each in the separate pre-carved regions of our minds?

And once that happened
it seemed we could never return
to those warm sparkly waters we had been enjoying.

Sometimes it seems as if my mind is my enemy
full of pigeon holes that trip me up
and separate me from the souls of others
and my own.

What would it take to fill those holes
and walk into a deeper terrain of mutuality?
What would it take for me to glide over the rocky ground of opinion
into the cool meadow of compassion?

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