

Jen Webb

In the studio

1

Dip your toe in; if it feels safe to do so, then slide in and submerge yourself fully. Don't hold your breath: breath is not required. When you can bear it no longer, emerge slowly, take a deep breath, then turn to the mirror and examine yourself, closely and cold. Subjects report peeling skin; a slower heartbeat; accelerated pulse in the throat; the curve of a lover's lip; a brain that hums with new matter. Your needs will seem more pressing than before, your urges. Ignore them. Poetry always demands more than it needs. Take two aspirin; take up a pen; stare into the sun; write.

2

Sleep without silence, rest without rest. You even dream under contract, naked under my naked gaze, making art. In the next room, she stares down from high on the wall. Within the frame her hands turn, and turn, hands old as mine, all knuckles and loose skin, smears of old paint and all time's wounds shining. This morning you clutched me with your month-old hands. *Don't touch me*, I said. You'll catch mortality. If anything can make the world fresh again, it's you, arriving only weeks ago, without a plan.

3

Cars and bikes and scooters call out and the air rings with quartal chords, unresolved accidentals: ghost orchestras playing out of time. He says: *'A machine is less precise than a leaf'*.^{*} Along the impure streets, trees stretch their backs, old women stretch their backs, a man rides his scooter through a building and off the kerb. He says *'There's a very thin line between humidity and humility'*.^{*} You look into every window, and see nothing you know, and now it's pissing down sound, quavers and semiquavers flooding the gutters, and you without an umbrella. You really don't belong here, do you?

**from As It Lays, Michael Chow in interview with Alex Israel, 2012*

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