

Job Interview

Through my windows
I see your windows and frame,
your curtains, shutters, and paint,
but I know zilch of the private
hassles and jollities in your house.

I properly inquire about your degree,
your courses, your work history,
and then watch you dance
your verbal employment jig.
But I must not ask into the chasms
of your being
where lies the real you--
such would be corporate taboo.

I do hear that catch in your voice
over a certain part of your past.
I do see that eagerness
to dwell on a fleeting achievement.

I am Sigmund Freud
analyzing your vocational dreams,
and you are Napoleon Hill
thinking and growing rich.
You are strategizing on your side
of the chessboard by all the rules
as I offer gambits here and there,
then inscrutably castle.

Whole dictionaries of words remain
unspoken in our 45 ticking minutes,
and yet somehow
I recognize my story in yours.
You and I are each someone
struggling to carve out
a safe and joyful survival from
a murderously mysterious world.
We are each a failingly successful,
triumphantly agonizing being
making small steps
toward what appears right.

You misread me
if you see in me a company man.
I am in a way you,
on trial,
absorbing what meaning
can be made of our encounter.

You wonder what I am thinking
as I speak glibly of opportunities,
and I wonder who you really are
as you smile with hollow confidence.
Will I give you a favorable rating?
Will you make us a good employee?
Fate has hung you and me
in her balance
on either side of this empty table.

When we go out from our room,
we will shake hands,
smile pleasantries,
and fade back into our
respective anonymities,
each hoping we have done
right by the other,
and each knowing we haven't,
quite.

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