

RECEIVING FLOWERS

Nicholas Messenger

People keep on giving us this pot of flowers.
It is an obsession with them. Or it is the custom
to give everybody one, and this is ours.
Or maybe this is one of those symbolic plants:
there's something everyone is labouring to thrust on
our attention. It is tropical in some soft-penduled way
yet dark, as though it would be comfier in slanted
twilight in a torrid mothy forest.
But, although we water it assiduously, and never say
rude things about it, nor about its donor,
very soon our ill-considered nurture has it in the poorest
possible condition, prone to all sorts of disgusting
glaucous fungal equatorial maladies, and proner
still to being noticed dead among the cotton reels and solder
on the kitchen window sill, precisely by the ones entrusting
its significant, or simply well-intentioned photosynthesis
to our administration. So that they can more discreetly moulder
we dis-pot them and transplant them by the fence in serial
arrangement. There they claim a kind of languishing parenthesis
of immortality. To give them fertilizer, or to spray them
would be too like gardening a dead relation: too memorial
a service altogether. Fortunately tough-topped, tufty grass
comes up around them and obscures what they are saying;
although, that may be exactly it: the pale suspension
of their lives, like those in preservation under domes of glass,
foreseen, in fact, enshrined, in some lugubrious intention.

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