

Juan Pajaro

We Five (*you were on my mind*)

Cuando oído, laundress, when I heard
the pattern of your sandals on the hard
wood floors of heaven above, I nearly
soared to the window. Begging the same

as nails bending away from the rusty
hammer claw for five more minutes in bed.
Alone under covers, muñeca, in the fog
of Beverly Bivens' low tenor escaping

duct-taped speakers. Obsessed, I went
quickly to the corner to ease my brain &
threw pennies at the bus as it drove past
which I thought would help but instead

it sounded like the time I left my belt
in the dryer of your kinder heart.

Bernadette

caught a city-rabbit & kept it in a cage
barely big enough for it to twitch
its gray-smog whiskers, alleyway tail,
its walking-in-the-cold nose. I don't

have any underwear left, she said,
licked soup from the white spoon
slipped it back in its plastic, then
into her pocket. The red halo around

her nose piercing's infection. Burn it
all, she said, belched & went on about
water pressure in the roominghouse.
He looks at her through his functioning

eye & says you slept well last night,
are you dreaming again of Cataluña?

Inmigrante in the City

Porcelain swan tea kettle with Heaven scent.
Green sky, gray morning aroma, there, a tea
for an angry village. Candle mornings needle
the knapsack draped over the camel, back

tracking through his dinner. After Adam
& evening disturbs his reading, he strikes
a match & plants apple seeds, illicit steam
from champiñón dumplings. Are you alive

behind earphones? sunshades? I'm alone
in a world I cannot name. Eagle & sparrow
share a nest. The boy uses the green side
of the sponge to clean the steel pot he ate

soup from. Minestrone. He don't wanna go
home. Hot bag of Heaven's great exfoliator.

I Am Not a Dumb Flower

Ponce de Leon started a band in de Campos
where he & his friends were apex predators
elbowing gazelle from watering holes, drank
in Naples & kicked it in Havana. Fountain

drinks flowing: Orange, Mr. Pibb, RC Cola –
mix them together & stare off into the starry
distance, or your life is a sham. Sun insistent
calls me out into the world & up into another.

Motown, I was out of my mind, she was in
her pajamas & the Vanderbilt t-shirt, I lent her
my toothbrush. Whispery whiskey talk & head
resting on my chest is the discovery I have been

waiting to afford. Forever's low tide. I wish
I needed sheets so we could shop for them together.

To the Guy Who Flashes my Sister on the Red Line

Please respect her future children, at least
the boy like me who loves his mother
enough to put a bullet in your neck

without a gun, press until thick whiskered
skin gives way – can you feel that
suppressed rage? Please, little Pedro-shaker,

pillar-bug of the third rail, put your piece
away. Her weak heart keeps me up at night
like chills that shredded her sleep for weeks

while nurses hurried in white Keds to care
intensively, fold blankets for my mother
who tried to sleep beside her every night –

there is no comparable love. This is not
poetry: I will kill you. My love is anger.

Juan Pajaro studied at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Harold Washington College in Chicago. He lives in Humboldt Park, where he writes poetry and works at the United Center. He has published under pennames with *Prensa Mexicana*, *Chicago Reader*, *Frontera*, *Wisconsin Review*, and elsewhere. When the Bulls are not playing, you can find Juan reading Nelson Algren, Alfonso Reyes, and Saul Bellow with a cup of coffee and comfortable shoes.