

On Thanksgiving morning, I gulp down triplicate
diet pills so I don't have to eat.
Unafflicted with an invitation anywhere, the gym closed,
I sit on a bench facing Bristol Harbor.
This is Rhode Island and that's ocean water.
Maybe I should drive up to the State House
with the Quakers and act useful,
but I stick to this cracked white bench and think of women
in coffee shops writing in leather-bound journals,
cups of adult herbal tea at the ready,
their calm separateness foreboding as boiling oil.
I'm over-and-done-with, a set of monkey bones in outer space.
I can't even take pleasure
in the perpetuity of shimmering marina,
bright orange buoys, and the eccentricity of sailboats
still anchored out of season, naked masts too proud to move.
I look straight through the occasional jogger or cyclist
preemptively working off an engorgement.
Mute seagulls plunge along the jagged shore,
gloating on the wing and hunting for scraps, ancillary to nothing.

I consider reading a book, and then here comes this old man.
There's no other way to put it.
Here. He. Comes.
The guy's in his sixties, at least, and he's wearing baggy,
dark blue pants and a light blue windbreaker,
his dirty flannel shirt untucked underneath.
What hair he has left is short and silver;
he keeps rubbing his tonsure like he can't believe it.
He walks carefully down the bike path,
angling toward the shallows, trying to find a particular spot.

He doesn't look drunk exactly.
Something in the air feels like suicide or honor
or an impossibly expensive promise.
I half-expect him to wade out into the surf
and swim for the shipping lanes, but he stops at the rocks.
As he reaches inside his pocket and takes out a necklace,
the sun smears across the sky.
While he leans over and washes the necklace,
the sea sparkles like chewed glass.
For a moment, as they say, my veins stop pumping their dark *ars poetica*.
I want to feel calm. I want to feel calm. Please, let me feel calm.