



## School

A school on recess is silent.  
It is not empty.

The men who handle the fixing  
nod their sweet heads at the sight of you,  
ask with such earnestness if you need something,  
you could kiss them.

The women in the office have grown weary of the AC,  
or they are sweltering,  
battling humidity that curls the papers,  
bringing order to what has been pure chaos.

Your presence feels like an intrusion,  
pure annoyance.  
You can't help but agree.  
Still, they will smile and sigh,  
help.

The halls are buffed or not.

The gym is waxy with a sheen you can smell from the cafeteria,  
ready for the adolescent sound and fury.

Somewhere,  
there is a mess of boxes.  
A wilting trophy case.  
A stink still rising from  
last year's lost and found.  
A tangle of pests feasting  
on forgotten Easter candy.

Somewhere,  
a classroom is lit by daylight only.  
Maybe an ancient desktop chugs along,  
resuscitated.

There, a teacher surveys industrial dust,  
stares into the middle distance—  
a near-empty lot,  
an overgrown courtyard,  
an extravagantly astro-turfed field—  
considers the enormity of it all.  
Sighs.  
Gets back to work.

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# Truth and Love

There are a million things  
I should be doing right now  
That aren't writing a poem  
So I will write a poem

I'm using an old note  
On my phone so I promise  
The title is not premeditated  
It's just something

One of my students said  
During the usual Wednesday  
Afternoon meeting of the  
Malden High School

Philosophy Club it was  
The start to her rejoinder  
"So back to the Truth  
And Love thing" we had

Been discussing the  
Question "What is love"  
And we could not agree  
If love was closer

To Truth or Untruth  
Like when Proust's  
Jealous Lover thinks  
Albertine is cheating or

When one student talks  
About how her sister  
Says she loves her  
Abusive boyfriend

Even went back to him

She said how can we  
Know what it's like  
From the outside

(I hear this and think  
About how no one would  
Understand Lol Stein  
If she explained herself)

And then someone else  
Says sometimes even on  
The inside you don't know  
Like you could think

Everything's fine but  
You're really hurting  
The person you love or  
You're calling something love

That isn't and now  
We are talking about labels  
Who can call what  
What and two students

Gesture at my bi pride  
Flag during their stories  
About how they relate  
To that label, what coming

Out was like for them  
The munchkins are almost  
Gone and we agree  
We'll continue next week

Talking about labels  
We haven't gotten  
To the bottom of it yet  
Like the laundry pile I

Should be putting away  
Instead of writing this

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