

Four Rounds Of Nothing

Greetings stranger wrapped tight in fists.
We become warriors with our curves,
our pectorals' glossy ribbon,
our arms' sturdy swift geography
and the turtle hunch of our uneasy heads.

We touch gloves which sandpaper the eyes,
exchanging bruise for bruise.
We dance tip-toe under a hollow church of light
for a blessing of mixed and mordant cheers.
When we lock to clinch and pause
we marry our sweat for quick divorce
and give the house its voyeur worth of pain.

(Another round and you are done.)

We punish mouths our mothers nursed
and gasp elusive metaphysics of air.
Your left hook drums my Adam's rib
as my jab destroys the Athens of your nose.

(Another round and I am done.)

Hitting deadly is hating well.
And so we trade and bleed and weave
from rope to rope and bell to bell. Quid pro quo.
But our fight is not in this ring
punching to please a deeper need than we yet know.

(Another round like this and we both are done.)

— Leslie Woolf Hedley

San Francisco, California

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