

STAR SALESMAN

You're native to this territory, skilled
in local idiom and dialect,
politically correct, at ease on stage
with pagers, flow charts, wine lists, limousines.

You sprawl across the king-size hotel bed,
designer alter ego hanging pressed,
awaiting morning's cue, your Gucci shoes
ashine for well-rehearsed auditions for
the role of sweet success tomorrow-- or
you'll even settle for a part next week.

A dozen times each month you play this lead.
And nothing but heroically blank verse
suffices to recount the episodes
you tell yourself in mocking dialogue
in rhythm as you buff your manicure
and duly note the comic undertones
that permeate this neo-classic farce.

Provider of expected locomotion,
the style and polish to complete the plot,
to make the entrance and escort the client
to lunch, silk lining iridescent wit,
lapels well-tailored with sincerity,
pants creased with confidence. Your faded shorts
don't show as lively anecdotes emerge
from pockets filled with practiced protocol
and uptown jokes, a little charge card magic.
Instead of hotdogs, you have haute cuisine.

Despite the talent and the presentation,
the bottom line is (how you hate that line!)
the customers aren't clapping for the number.
However bourbon-coated and benign
they make it sound, their script says NO, a word
of lead and ice that lodges in soft spots
beneath your belt, attacking gourmet spoils.
And when the scene plays out, the wound-up mime
propels the props to yesterday's airport
where soon the custom-made attire, almost
adept enough to give its own performance,
goes inanimate back on the plane.

Your seat-mate gripes about approaching winter.
You wonder how you'll pay for warmer clothes
before the ice man cometh, credit gone.

At last, unfolded in home's terminal,
you wait in line in Ma Bell's crowded alley,
and dredge your slept-in depths for change enough
to call, report the bust to your exec,
director of these high-camp, one-act flops--

who'll maybe say you don't still head the cast.