

Facing the Empty Page

Elizabeth Nannestad

The empty page
looks all innocence
but has its own sense of humour.

You might decide
to call yourself Mme X, be sighted in foreign cities without forwarding address.
The empty page will be at home, waiting.

The empty page is
the Inquisition: you could throw yourself upon it,
say, *save me*.

The empty page has
no heart
no home
no pity.

The empty page takes
everything you can give it, still is only satisfied, if ever
for a very short time.

It is a mistake to introduce the empty page
to your prospective lover. It will spoil everything
leaving you alone, just you and the empty page, forever.

Don't be a fool for it,
the empty page.
Take refuge in supermarkets

with two radios and a loudspeaker
playing at once.
The empty page can't stand children's cartoons on television

so turn up the volume.
Give the controls to a person aged less than three
who'll be a match for it,

the empty page. Yet
neither will it be
set aside indefinitely.

The empty page is closely related to the Great Australian Desert.
Good men, good women, died trying to cross it.
Some people find that encouraging.

The empty page
haunts the O.K. Corral
looking for someone, might as well be you, to gun down.

The empty page is
some people's idea of desirable
and not unwilling

to come round for a short time to your way of thinking.
The empty page will
settle in

take your name at the bank
drink your whisky
inhabit your house

while you'll feed on your own fingernails
wear black
suffer doubt.

The empty page will retain affection, so long as you don't
shove it, whack it, thrash it, push it around
or make crossings out.

The empty page, it's hell
to live with.
And to live without.

Nannestad, E. (1996). *If he's a good dog he'll swim*. Auckland, NZ: Auckland
University Press. pp. 1-2.
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