

Matt, Home From a Run

Unvarying, the beeline to the bedroom
where he stoops to untie his shoes,
prising one off and levering the other
off with his toes. Summers, he tugs
his shirt off, too, standing bare-chested
in the doorway, his hair flattened
to his torso like a tract of turned earth.
Winters, he just unzips his jacket
and lets the sides flap, two light chords
unpinned from the music of internal heat.
Then to the kitchen for two glasses
of water in quick succession, derricking
before the counter on the balls of his feet.
I suspect he doesn't realize I have memorized
his patterns, would say, *you barely glanced
up when I came in*. He looks boyish
in the morning light, with his cowlick rebellious
against his neck. He rattles a tattoo
on his belly, less leftover endorphin
than a closet pride in its still flatness,
assurance he has kept another day in check.
His drying sweat as he passes smells
of neither sex nor labor but the damp sheets
after his fever broke the midnight
of his thirty-first birthday. He never
hops the creaking floorboard near
the bedroom door, and, missing that warped
squelch, I would find the silence menacing
and vast. In headier days, I would sometimes
follow him, still sometimes follow him.
Now I see him always. *Don't look
at your feet*, he chided when we ran
together, *look up*. So I wait for this moment
every time. I have looked up ever since.