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Truth About Love

I apologize for not being Gandhi or Tom
the mailman who is always kind.

He makes his way every day no matter
the mood of the sky with our words

in a sack and Gandhi made the English
give India back without

taking a gun for a wife. My contribution
to the common good is playing

with the alphabet in a little room
while the world goes foraging

for food. I'm a better poet than man
and it's well known how little

my verbs are worth. I am my only subject,
being the god of my horizons.

What saves me is that just beyond my skin
the world of yours is where

I'd rather live. The AMA says you've added
seven point six years to my life.

In a phrase, love is a transfer of wealth.
This is why Adam Smith gave up
romantic verse. In trying to say what can't
be said I'll take the Dragnet
approach. Just the facts. I'd be dead
sooner without you, you'll die faster
for being a Mrs., raw deal can't be more
clearly defined. To make amends
I offer ten percent more kisses each year.
Or do I do more harm the closer
we become? If yes, leaving would be love
and a better man might. But my thrills
are selfishly domestic. I like sweeping words
into piles and whispering good night.

Bob Hicok
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My Life With a Gardener

The screen door firecrackers closed.
I find her at the sundry drawer
prowling for twine. I'm nothing
she sees. There's a tornado
in her hair, her face is streaked
with dirt like markings applied
before the rituals of drums.
I've watched her shadow break free
and tend the next row of corn.
I understand this eagerness
as fully as I can speak for the ocean.
I say water is behind everything,

a blue dictator, say waves
are obsessed with their one word
but have no idea what that word is.
Her hands enter soil like needles
making the promise of a dress
from cloth. In December she begins
smelling lilacs, by February
she sees the holes
peppers burn through snow. I see her,
she's the last green thing I need.
When finally she's pushed inside
by the rude hands of dusk,
I set down my life for her skin,
taught all day how to smell
like the sun, and the hundred
directions of her hair, and eyes
that look through me to flowers
that only open their mouths
to speak with the moon.

Bob Hicok

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Bob Hicok's latest book of poems, *Animal Soul* (Invisible Cities, 2001) is a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Boulevard*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Southern Review*, *The Pushcart Prize XXV*, two editions of *The Best American Poetry*, and other publications.