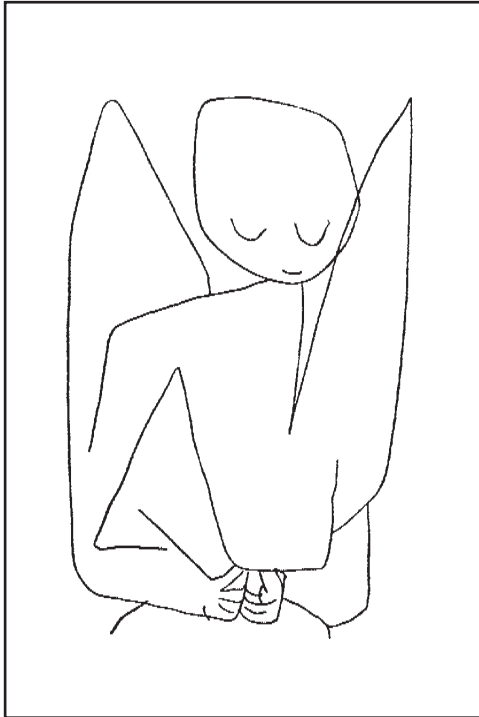


A Small Book on Yellow



Consent Form with Signature

Rest.

Baudelaire

Passion

Sunday Night

The French Word for "Sky"

Y E L L O W

Consent Form with Signature

She says if she loses her legs
she will be okay:
she will focus on immediate rewards—
learning alone
to drop from bed to wheelchair,
dressing,
using the bathroom.
Her mind,
her intelligence,
are undiminished,
and the zeppelin of imagination
unmoored from the ground of the body
—ascendant. She's not waiting—
the path of grace might be faster on wheels.

Rest.

It's so late I could cut my lights
and drive the next fifty miles
of empty interstate
by starlight,
flying along in a dream,
countryside alive with shapes and shadows,
but exit ramps lined
with eighteen wheelers
and truckers sleeping in their cabs
make me consider pulling into a rest stop
and closing my eyes. I've done it in the past,
parking next to a family sleeping in a Chevy,
mom and dad up front, three kids in the back,
the windows slightly misted by the sleepers' breath.
But instead of resting, I'd smoke a cigarette,
play the radio low, and keep watch over
the wayfarers in the car next to me,
a strange paternal concern
and compassion for their well being
rising up inside me.
This was before
I had children of my own,
and first felt the sharp edge of love
and anxiety whenever I tiptoed
into darkened rooms of sleep
to study the peaceful faces
of my beloved darlings. Now,
on lonely nights like this,
the fatherly feelings are so strong
the snoring truckers are lucky
I'm not standing on the running board,
tapping on the window,
asking, Is everything okay?
But it is. Everything's fine.
The trucks are all together, sleeping

on the gravel shoulders of exit ramps,
and the crowded rest stop I'm driving by
is a perfect oasis in the moonlight.
The way I see it, I've got a second wind
and an all-night country station on the radio.
Nothing for me to do on this road
but drive and give thanks:
I'll be home by dawn.

Baudelaire

“Before I compose a piece,” said Erik Satie,
“I walk around it several times,
accompanied by myself.”

Hemingway said he would cross the bridge
to the *Île de la Cité* and walk along the quais
when he was trying to think something out.

Aragon notes
how men love to linger
on the threshold of their imagination.

Baudelaire says he would take long strolls,
and find himself everywhere
at home.

Rimbaud said that one must be
a seer who reads signs
of wonder.

Leonardo wrote in his notebooks:
“Pay attention to the street towards evening,
when the weather is bad,

to how much grace
and sweetness can be seen
in the faces of the men and women.”

“The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
petals on a wet, black bough,”
Pound said.

During his surrealist period
Giacometti sculpted only those objects

inspired by the “interior model.”

The fox says to the little prince,
“What is essential
is invisible to the eye.”

Yesterday, at the Hotel de Ville, I saw
children skating on the ice rink
even though spring is almost here and it’s warm

and the ice beneath the children
was melting into clear pools
and it looked like they were skating on water.

And then tonight,
walking home from the cafes of the Bastille,
on a florist’s windowglass that framed an enormous red
flower,

I saw painted in fluid white cursive a line by Romain Gary,
*“N’ayons pas peur d’etre heureux,
c’est juste un bon moment a passer....”*

Don’t be afraid to be happy.
Even this sweet moment is passing....

Sunday Night

After they leave the restaurant,
the little girl's father
drives her home, says goodnight

at the door to her mother's apartment.
Already it's late, past bedtime.
In her room, her nightgown

is laid out on the satin bedspread,
but tonight, once she's had her bath,
her mother lets her stay up awhile.

She plays with her dolls. Every night
she puts Mommy and Daddy in bed
together, watching over them and praying

to make sure nothing bad happens.
Then she tucks Baby into a crib
smaller than her very small hand.

The French Word for “Sky”

I'm tilting my head and looking up
at the Louvre's ceilings,
gazing at the work
of Louis Le Vau and Charles Le Brun,
walking the palace's rooms
and trying to decide which I love more,
Delacroix's *Apollo Slays the Python*
or Georges Braques' doves?
In the Salle de Bronze,
Cy Twombly's sky is blue,
a hue I'd never have imagined
for the Louvre.

There are many blues,
but this is Mediterranean blue—
eternal blue of the Greek gods
and light-drenched sea and sky.
And there is a yellow sun
and red and green planets
that I'd like to think even I could have painted
and I am reminded how
when I was a young father
my little study
lined with tall bookshelves
became the baby's crib room.
I painted the ceiling blue—
the French word for “sky” is ciel—
and pasted plastic stars there,
little stars that shone
when I turned out the lights
and kissed my child.
Some nights I'd lie on the floor
next to my son in the dark,
stargazing, thinking
about palaces and crib rooms
and how deeply we love

ceilings fretted with stars.
Lying on the floor
and listening to the baby babble and coo,
I felt like Napoleon in his palace bed,
peering up at painted tempest clouds torn apart
and revealing the glory of heaven,
the gilded ceiling crowded
with cherubs and red-winged seraphim,
a host of golden angels
keeping watch over the household
while the tired emperor closed his eyes
and dreamt extravagant and marvelous dreams.