

Vestments Lie

— Michelangelo tries to intellectualize his love of the human body while refusing his homosexuality, and failing, like a cinder, he relates an unclear dream.

Robes and vestments lie. They drape instead of reach
 and hearts drape their way through nothing. The ripest
 bodies pulse—to thirst, to drink, to suck, to slake,
 to chew with fury, while the mind ensnares the nature
 of its space. The pulse of flow is muscular. And who
 can tell what coats my chest when a rock of beauty
 heaves. I carry it for days. And is it him: Or is he
 just a cup from which I drink. A cup of flesh that stings.
 The body quakes and glows, a map of strain. Its blood
 flexes in its cage. Its syrup cruels out the heart.
 What's in it is a Birth, a Death, a crack, a snap
 where all things give. Taste can lie, the eye deceive,
 but muscle can't pretend to lift or suffer its own weight.
 I never think to let it happen. But undressed by Godful eyes,
 I paint a touch. No brushes but in tongues. Till a mind
 in speech flexes like a rump rising from a bath. A heart
 while loving pulls up taut like kneeling skin on bone.
 And heat bleaches knots, the way soul pours rage
 through skin. I'll take the swollen trembled life
 with all its fired wounds. For the belly of love
 like the bottom of stars is incapable of total night.
 And an honest man wears his fate till a yawn in skin
 is a vow. It stops my heart. The words all cease.
 It's hard to say. Just know the age is jealous of what
 nakedness can bring. God lights in thighs, He makes them
 glisten, until I dive. Then God is gone. Just legs entangled
 to the left, chest twisting to the right. But now, I've come
 to dream of postures, of naked trusts that tense, and
 last night, in a mineral dance, I held a falling boy
 who rippled from all he couldn't seize. He thought
 I went to fondle him. I slapped him in the ear.
 He ran away. I've told them all. I'm not interested.
 They badger me. The boy returned and now was deaf,
 but as he turned, his shoulders rippled bronze,
 then grey. It made me take him near.

— *Mark Nepo*