

What it Look Like

BY TERRANCE HAYES

Dear Ol' Dirty Bastard: I too like it raw,
I don't especially care for Duke Ellington
at a birthday party. I care less and less
about the shapes of shapes because forms
change and nothing is more durable than feeling.
My uncle used the money I gave him
to buy a few vials of what looked like candy
after the party where my grandma sang
in an outfit that was obviously made
for a West African king. My motto is
Never mistake what it is for what it looks like.
My generosity, for example, is mostly a form
of vanity. A bandanna is a useful handkerchief,
but a handkerchief is a useless-ass bandanna.
This only looks like a footnote in my report
concerning the party. *Trill* stands for what is
truly real though it may be hidden by the houses
just over the hills between us, by the hands
on the bars between us. That picture
of my grandmother with my uncle
when he was a baby is not trill. What it is
is the feeling felt seeing garbagemen drift
along the predawn avenues, a sloppy slow rain
taking its time to the coast. Milquetoast
is not trill, nor is bouillabaisse. *Bakku-shan*
is Japanese for a woman who is beautiful
only when viewed from behind. Like I was saying,
my motto is *Never mistake what it looks like*
for what it is else you end up like that Negro
Othello. (Was Othello a Negro?) Don't you lie
about who you are sometimes and then realize
the lie is true? You are blind to your power, Brother
Bastard, like the king who wanders his kingdom
searching for the king. And that's okay.
No one will tell you you are the king.
No one really wants a king anyway.

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Source: *How to Be Drawn* (Penguin Books, 2015)