

The Sweaty Tango

Emily Manger

The apologetic fit
fingers slip
and perspiration drips.
I've got my lips ajar and
as we're sparring
hurry is implicit
every visit's inconsistent
with some different dance to do.
I can only look to you
for the next move to make.
I sweat and yet
you've got exactly what it takes
to make my wallet pour
like a waterfall
and you're so firm and fair
with the authoritarian air you keep
people stare and stay
they watch and wait
you're a modern take
on an age-old institution
a fusion of old and new
movements and transactions
aimed at mutual satisfaction
using clues for what to do
but so elusive in confusion

poison flash of eyes
from those in line
standing stamping
hands around their shopping
watching as I scramble in this
stilted interaction
fingers tap communication
still inscrutable contraption
leaves me wracked
you beast of fact
your scripted greetings
meet my human clumsiness.
I'm under stress
and it's a mess of guesses
less is more
coins across the floor
the audience will see me crawl
and you as always
calm and sure:
please take your items . . .
take your items . . .
take your items . . .
wait for assistance . . .