



James Bybee

A Portrait

Through the lens he surveyed the sky.

The only sound, scribbling on paper.

The heavens lay before him.
A round room lined with books.

He wore a blue cap. It was a cold night.
He wore spectacles he had made himself.

He sat on a stool with his knees propped up,
to get a good angle of sight.

He drew moons, comets, constellations.
He calculated distances, dimensions.

The sky rotated.

He slept.

Far

Far, far away from the moon we stand.
Finding ourselves in an outward place,
on an incidental spot.

Far away from the moon we stand.

The spot moved. We found ourselves
nowhere in particular,
far away from the moon.

Then we chased the spot to an inward place.

To the place we were before,
the outwardly inward spot,
far away from the moon.

Quiet

The quetzal sat on a banana leaf
above a man in a hammock.
The quetzal shrieked, astonished at the sight of a
man.
The man, sleeping, dreamt of the quetzal bird, as the
wind swung the hammock back and forth.
The quetzal questioned the presence of the man,
wondering what he was.
He wanted a closer look, so he lifted his wings and
landed on the man's stomach.
The man was talking in his sleep.
Oh, beautiful quetzal, he said.
The quetzal answered, what are you?
The man said, I am a man.
The quetzal said, I am a god.
The man said, I've never heard a god before.
The quetzal said, you will never hear one again.
The quetzal ascended to his banana leaf.
It was very quiet.

Perfection

Certain times have been put aside for tomorrow's colors.

The painter, besmudged, slept in his loft. He dreamt of the beautiful paintings he would paint the next day.

Day after day, in his search for perfection, he became poorer and poorer, thinner and thinner.

He needed a certain light. He needed a certain inspiration. He needed a certain model. He needed a certain color.

One day he achieved the perfect painting. He no longer wanted to paint.

He became a banker.

James Bybee is one of the founders of *Caveat Lector*. He is the author of several books, including *The Pumpkin Thief* and *Dressing Room Diary*. He lives in Northern California.