



## THE MAITRE D' BROODS ALONE

*inspired by "The Egret" – a photograph by Gerald O. Dukes*

Baffled by Kate, the young tattooed GM who asked  
if he took Valium, the maître d' leaned  
against a lamp post outside the Café Du Metro  
smoothing finger-socketed hair

In his day dining was an experience, not a hurried meal  
before a show or a game. Customers were *guests*  
if they wanted spinach instead of kale then by all means  
*Je vous en prie Madame*

*No substitutions, snarls the chef, eighty-six the artichokes*  
*Push the carrot soup today, Montauk pearls tomorrow*  
*Hustle, Kate's always hissing, as the maître d' curls*  
Mr. Heymann's crumbs onto a napkin

He knows his days are numbered but he's never lost  
a single cork, never touted a dish not tasted  
And he knows better than anyone where to seat  
the *first* Mrs. Heymann

After the lights go out he'll slip back inside, twirl his  
fingers around a cigarette, trade Cyndi Lauper  
for Jacques Brel, and remember the time he once  
flambéed bananas for Audrey Hepburn

—Ashley Memory