

Lovers

When red lipstick is your only lover
you get a little shaky,
you ponder the validity of softness
and reasons your tongue circles your mouth
so deliberately in such a defiant manner.
One more thick colored coat, then, for you.
Why doesn't anything else stay with your lips?

When perfume is the only one
who will warm your neck,
you begin the self-doubting questions.
"Why do I keep this?" "Who is this for?"
You say, "if only this stays alive..."
and the bottle feels ever comforting against your hand.
At least you know you're not dead.

When silk is the only thing
that will caress your shoulders,
you become confused.
You think surely there is something more
than objects five inches around you.
But believing is hard
when silk touches you all over.
Can there be, is there more?

And it's almost laughable
to be summed up
in a few cosmetic wonders,
making yourself, really, a self-lover,
squeezing and smothering your skin
in self-affection.

But you know
this bit of love, this drop of heavy breathing
is the way to sustain your heartbeat
when it sinks to levels so low.

You know to reach out a sensitive hand
to feel your own red cream,
your own white liquid,
your own silk that drips
down your thighs

For one long, false moment
you forget not to smile.
and you can feel
the muscles in your mouth twitch
as they move upward
in aching relief.

— Carmen Largaespada