

Agoraphobia

I stared at the message for too long.
Some old friends in town, no excuses this time.
One night only, and then they would be flying back.
I am anxious; we do not get out much, me and my breath.
It does not behave in the crowds.

I think that it holds on to some bitterness
because I keep it all for myself, holed up in my lungs,
in my house where we are safe,
and the walls soak up all the sound,
and the windows are stuck shut.

I'm sure it does not suspect
that I love to walk with it,
calmly through the crowd downtown
to the table with my friends, on the patio
where the legs of the chairs grind against the sandy cement
and the clicking heat lamps echo and blow.

But its nature is wild, and no leash will fit
and I know that as I open my mouth to greet them
my breath will leave me, to find the gregarious type,
those who will breathe it in deftly and deeply,
because mine always were so shallow and short.

As it rushes away through the laughter of the crowd
I am sitting breathless, pretending that I know
how to get this unfamiliar air inside.
Where is the exit to this place anyway?
Because I can't stay long. In fact, I should be leaving soon.
Back to my lonely home that is now so inviting,
where my breath and I can meet once more,
and it can fill up my lungs again, and fill me in
on the evening I've missed.

--Eric Greilach