

The Pink Cloth

The woman thought: No, I will not, today I cannot, and then
she could:

The setting up, the simple logistics, a pink cloth laid across
the table,
In the center, like eyes to watch her move, a bowl of dogwood.

The trick, she had learned, was to feel the color first, before
the mind could think.

Another time it would be iris with green, or blue and yellow;
Now it could be nothing else but judgment day of white on pink.

Nevertheless, she had to put it to herself as would an engineer—
After the *banderilla* stuck the brutal, indolent, sensual life,
Panache would have to see her through as if, in this respect,
she had no peer.

Sometimes the simplest gesture, then, requires the service
of a matador:

No, I will not, today I cannot, and then, I must,
The eyes of dogwood watching her in lieu of that strained place
where thousands roar.

We come into the room, without pique, and sit down at the table,
Drink a glass of wine the color of thick bull's blood,
Obtuse, or just a genial passing glance upon the surface of a fable.

God bless this woman in her weary, wary, always watchful, wit—
The pink cloth, the dogwood — the pittance given for the daily keep:
You do not know it, but her white hand open on the table is where
the Furies sit.

— Charles Edward Eaton