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On Inability (Mantis)

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Sharon Black On Inability

The inability of sea spray and tenure—
of checkerboard and oven mitt.

Ineffectual Mediterranean—

The deficiency of dark colas—
of dried roses, film festivals
and stethoscopes.

When it comes right down to it the failure
of testaments to the founders,
auditory cues, mud and plywood,
the leaf-stuffed rain gutter and the one that's clear.

The inability of necrophilia—
of the protected center, green zones and inner sanctums—
of dinner and a movie.

Witnesses, penitents and bicycle messengers—
incapable without exception.

Without exception incapable mesa—
incapable embankment
and rolling pasture.

The inability of some onions to properly caramelize—
as if one could be persuaded by those that do.

Dare we mention the paralyzing ineffectiveness of discretion?

I'm talking about inability, not of the inspired ruin
or the unschooled or the unindexical,
but real failure on the part of lithographs
and redwood forests
and twenty-something women,
even the one from Ipanema—
unconvincing parades
with their marching bands in full stride,
instruments glinting in the approving sun,
flouting their inability to play
a single song backward.