Silent at every boring party
the pager would sit on my belt like a bad elf—
one of those little men shoveling chairs
catapulting felons into the air
in a drawing by Rogier van der Weyden

During dinner or sex or at the climax
of a movie or television show,
I let its aggravated beep speak
but at concerts, I set it to vibrate
in the hope I could reach the end of a piece
before feeling it rub on my leg like a cat,
the bridge of a cello
or the toe of your shoe.

Even when my elf slept in a drawer at home
and I was safely out of town,
any electronic sound made me reach down
and pat my empty belt like a forgetful father
for a misplaced child
or a Pavlovian dog pricking his ears at a bell.


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