

from *What We Thought We Knew*

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There is always something else to wonder at.
I mean it.

You only get to have a thing until you don't anymore;
part of the having is the not having.

To start, this is everything I want to remember:
the city spread below us like a fan,

the importance being the texture of air like that --
still as a glass of water.

Find thunderclouds. Find power outages.
Find the full green meaning of summer.

A sound, a color, a vision of nothing in particular:
prairie grass on a day in August.

I used to understand geometry.
Now here I am, all spread out

with a beer can between my knees like a picnic.
What are we going to do?

Plant little scraps of yellow paper all around the desk again?
A garden of words to harvest?

A Short Letter, in Waiting

Tonight a fallout sky hollows the throttled city,
evening orange to the point of whiteness.

In vacancy there is not much to be said
for exercises in successive thoughts, or for the simple gift of rhythm.

Just this week, down the street from where I live,
police found a woman's body wrapped in a blue tarp.

No apparent identifying marks.
These streets – heralds of misplaced feeling –

habituating auto-dumbfoundment.
Derailed, diminished, now I relish the simple accidents:

How a young girl told me she was thankful
for *everything under the sun*, but instead of *sun* she said *world*.

Those children, sending tiny droplets of pure wonder
through the universe like little atomizers, summoning you –

a distant point of energy floating somewhere
in the unknowable world – this hazy thing I feel but not cannot see.

In closing, let me remind you of the strange combinations of words
found on certain second-story porches in spring.

There are things we used to love
that we don't anymore. Let us tell ourselves that this is no great tragedy.

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To abandon means to never intend
to return to
again.

Every morning after he left I picked five words to describe the light.
Tried to make the same thing sound different
over and over.

Quantum Entanglement

We meet here to understand small things,
the science behind very little.

If I could explain this any faster
you'd have heard me *before* now.

A lot of good that would do us,
all things being, you know, spatially separated in a spacelike manner.

What does that even mean? See,
I want everything the way it is now but more fragile.

Wake up and be still.
The real world is much stranger than we imagine.

I might be ordinary, but I'd like to be both of us together.
You, looking here at you.

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Yellow light, gold light, particle light.

You see, this isn't a story about two people.
Its about fire. Or other malleable things.

The fall of an empire, for instance.

Find elegance. Find a secret.
There are lessons, it's true. Even in nothing.

I learned: you're not supposed to go alone
without pepper spray and a baseball bat.

**During the Performance of Our Mistakes
We Make the Same Mistakes**

Dear ghost, lightning always strikes in the first act
when there is someone else's ardor still smoking in the ashtray
and at stage left a door which represents a bathroom
or a very bad dream we wake from
when the actor in swim trunks puts a rectangle around all that's wrong with us.

Dear ghost, why did we agree to this?
The second act begins inside a small glass case
As in a dream each of the actors has a face which resembles something but is not his
and the place is indeterminate but unchanging like shame.
Shame like a bathroom door or a bad dream she enters and does not return from.

Oh ghost, I should not have left you in that wilderness.
But I was absolutely terrified then and only intermission moved me.

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How many things do you want to return to?
Cities, apartments, loves?

For a long time I wanted every place I had lived
to disappear,

too many memories
re-folded into someone else's like paper.

We saw a whole building pulled skyward one night,
waves of phosphorescence pulsing.

Flames are just versions of falling water sucked backwards,
versions of light.

I had never seen a house on fire.
The kids who did it hadn't either.

But they wanted to.

The New Covetables

after Charles Eames

Wind took the gabled roof far into an untilled field,
lifted its shingles light as paper secrets.

We suffered a slower unbuilding –
pried at edges of the moldered transom,
clawed at the handsome fenestrae.

With sharp points clinched,
pins held bone-tight in their frames –
perforated with the marks of a deliberate life.

In finally leaving that hollowed house, we set the floor afire –
cremated that beautiful mass of stuff, once fastened.

How we, as children, fingered the forest soil for bird points,
we now search ash for metal, warm and imperfect,

to straighten and return to the wooden keg.

Ubi Sunt

She brought a bulb and lit it through him –
a filament that flickered between gaps.

He made soft statues of foam and felt
cut them open and hid things -

sewed them shut with garish scars.
Their bodies warmed the floor of an attic room.

She grew thirsty.
Here is a glass, he said, pretend it isn't empty.

When the light failed
she listed all of the places where he might find her.

He listened.

What We Thought We Knew

You can make anything disappear that you want.
You just can't make it come back.

I thought I knew a lot about leaving.
Dawn light, disembodied light,

daylight bending backwards.
It all comes down to angles, anyway.

Dogs were cutting holes in the air with their mouths
when you said:

I want to show you something.
That was what you said. A secret.

What is supposed to be here?
The raised red lines I made and then followed?

Memories you can move through and between,
back and forth in the mind like a finger on a line.

For a long time after I went to all the same places.
It was the difference between pretending to sleep and sleeping.

But the funny thing about time is that there is no going back.
Nights we made imperfect circles in the grass.

Or a first snow:
the alleys like perfect chambers of moonlight,

haloes of breath rising.
I want them to be secrets.

But they are just forgotten avenues to nothing.
Reminders of something beautiful

that doesn't exist
anymore.