

Ken is Dying

*in memory of Ken Arnold*

Ken is dying  
in this quiet home on 76th Ave  
where the people seem to know  
everything's fine.

(A caller: I hear he's not doing so well.  
Another: He's great. It's just that  
he's dying. Ken, from his hospice bed:  
thanks for \*cough\* clarifying)

What else has the dying man to say?  
People have been giving him things:  
*Hardbats*. Hardhats?  
With lights? *With lights*.  
When asked where the pain is:  
*Scrotum*.

He drifts, mumbling,  
now waking with a start at a chair's creak.  
Pain runs freely through him,  
encountering little resistance,  
his body a reed.

Liminality isn't easy,  
but little fear is left in this man.  
Love has displaced it.

He floats on through dark tunnels  
hardhat-equipped  
for the next phase.

Terma

The ancients saw our predicament  
we face the past and back blindly  
into a future comprehensible

only in reverse; stumble often  
and uproariously to those peering down  
from the wings on our two-bit drama  
with the box seat perspective that turns  
every misery to a joke too perfect  
to be counted cruel.

Ancestors, angels, critics—  
discarnate eyes bejeweled,  
they don't hesitate to laugh,  
as often as they share our tears at some tribulation.

We're in on the fun, too, they know--  
have backstage passes to the heavenly show--  
but first we have to strut and fret  
here on earth where we come to forget.

How else to come to remember again  
that none, finally, is forsaken.

What calamities do we need to awaken?

Life's game dealt you the dreaded card AIDS

Back when I was a non-extant babe.

The ghost of disease put a light in your eyes  
that said, *I'm catching on now—major surprise—*

*a wind rustles through this skin sheaf*

*animates it til skin falls like leaves.*

*Don't hang on too tight, muster grace through the trials*

*What counts is the luminescence meanwhile.*

And so you presented me in mock solemnity

with a kid-size lightbulb, candy-filled.

The sweetness sucked out left pure symbol.

So it burns inside the mind's eye

like a *terma* unspooling, line by line

a hundred watt treasure buried in time.

How to thank you, JM, for the time-bomb gift—

transmission of your lineage?!—

to the child now grown and minted to white

tracing weird threads, whose first word was “‘ight!”

Geronimo's love manual for the mad

The weather-beaten volume

tumbles down off the shelf

lands face up to this piece

of underlined advice:

*keep opening*

*keep letting go*

*keep leaping off the next precipice*

simple instructions

that counter every grain

of sense you've hoarded

against the rumored famine.

*Let yourself be sucked through the cracks  
in the mirror. keep loving more fiercely  
until your sternum bows and your skull  
starts to crack: a definite station along the way.*

This manual seems to want  
editing. It's insanity, this embracing  
everything, holding nothing but the empty air  
this free-fall belongs to madmen

crazies learning to be angels

plunging until our wings

finally unfurl