

## Sense of Urgency

### *Adultery*

It can't always be like this,  
coasting up ninth avenue on skyscraper hips,  
every step a magnitude  
and every deep street a creature  
pulled taut with joy.  
One pair of pupils tracks every twist  
and tastes the word that trails  
"tomorrow," wondering where the three winds  
came from and why,  
the fourth another case of conviction.

Infidelity rusts in a copper gloss  
of busy, lazy, liar, love.  
Instinct crumbles  
out of unwritten driveways.  
The whole affair stings  
as it spins on a core of commitment  
that starts and stays out long past midnight  
wedded to what can never be worded.

The rest is exaltation,  
not sky but upward gaze that tugs  
the neck, raises the eyes  
and the wanting behind them.

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### *Assembly*

“He just mobilized the English language and sent it into battle” - President John F. Kennedy

They had always been lazy bums  
slumping around security, lounging  
with fingers and worlds balanced  
upon the lip of a long-stemmed glass.  
They drank whiskey and milk.  
Apple flesh filled their mouths.

It took sticks and wolves to move them, howling  
as the pace picked up. Words tumbled  
like the knotted fine hairs of the sun  
after months of being undone  
so that the only way to smoothen was to cut.

Poor English, your life of luxury broken  
against the sound of slicing  
through every known element,  
forced to write yourself, in the end.  
You will never rest in peace.

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### *Finishing "What Work Is"*

Sitting alone on the school bus is a mother. This is when I learn  
lyrics. Letters and light coat me  
like a yellow sun slicker. "Ben drove me home,"  
is what I will say. "There was traffic on the Deegan."  
Now is the perfect time for lies.  
There will always be seventh graders  
sticking and unsticking valor  
to the seats: bedtimes and magazines, gym class heroes,  
fresh thought soil, as they piece out who likes whom and what to wear,  
picking on the boy across the aisle or their nail polish.

"When butterflies fall in love," one girl says. I miss  
the rest. Something about hope. Something about a stomach.  
Now my mind floods with guts and monarchs,  
a rising orange storm that drives me to the park  
where we used to sing from our throats  
and laugh from a deeper place  
that has become difficult to find.

I have made it cover to cover.  
We near something, our spine creased  
but holding. When I say "I graduate in a month"  
to my elevator friend, it becomes true. My sister  
speaks middle school. In weeks and weeks,  
I will begin again with "Fear and Fame,"  
except the words will wave like old friends, our small talk  
shrinking as we walk the length of the city in snow storms.  
Human collarbones knot in the chest and do not emerge.  
Here will never again be new. This is a place too deep  
to leave, a song too long to lose, our stomachs full  
of monarchs, and when we open our mouths, they swell.

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### *Intoxication*

Overheard: "Is growing up just building a tolerance for happiness?"

All the infants are drunk.  
They hiccup excess, belching  
bubbles before words, clearly beyond speech  
and too far gone for walking (the light  
weights). This world, too much  
with them, might lead to a coma of years  
from which it would be difficult to surface.

Children, tipsy from a few small tastes,  
stumbling into sidewalks and bruising their knees.  
How irresponsible. They should have known  
better, or just said no. It doesn't take much  
to loosen, to slur their words, discover,  
and this explains boldness and the abundance  
of friends. At least they never get behind the wheel.

These days, it takes a lot to unfocus the eyes,  
to open the lips. We know  
our limits. How do I tell

joy? Certainty that comes after happy,  
precious pieces of the world found.  
This is intoxication. We raise  
a glass to the future  
with steady legs, strong words,  
eyes as clear as bottles of "yes."

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### *Sense of Urgency*

Days uncoil with legs well-rested, strides deepening  
upon a lawn that cups a sunlight sea.  
The days love to doze in places such as these,  
dorsal muscles at peace.  
You are with the hours.

Your train is going to leave, whether you make it or not.  
You would never drag your feet to slow circles  
no, you streak forward like an impending May.  
Your scarf is the terminal banner, a flight  
on its own already, heads swiveling in your wake that wonder  
what the hurry is. You know. You are  
with the hours.

By this point, you may never live near your best  
friend. The pot is boiling. All living things hunger.  
You cannot deny sleep when she hits. Memorize before it slips,  
capture, stanzas are with the hours, too. So far  
to go, so many tongues to cross, such planes!  
Thousands of ambitions zip– airborne  
treasures we all know but have left unnamed,  
the sparkledust of sunlight indoors,  
yours. Grab. You have books  
to read tonight, neon tastes and noble flocks  
of people to laugh with, a shower waiting for you with open arms!  
There will never be enough hours.

You are going to go. Attend lecture. Wait awake  
for somebody to answer the phone (there will always be other minds  
to press against. Satisfy seeking). Reject exhaustion.  
Look up. Raise the eyes, the arms, hold your body like a gymnast  
because you defend matters of precision.  
Study the dictionary and ask many questions. Speak  
with those who can. Wear  
beautiful fabrics and notice their intimacy with your skin,  
how no other touch can be there, so dominantly there,  
as this world's. Spread your legs and love.  
Do not equate the good with the less good. Your value  
and valuing are abalone spoons, polished and pure  
nests for caviar globes that will remain untainted.  
The hours claw each other's faces  
in a scramble to fit into your next bite,  
the yawning one followed by a swig  
of pink champagne.

Master the kitchen of this life. You want

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white walls, steel tables that stay stainless,  
every motion well-used, sauces simmering, sorrel  
leaves kept cool and clean and bursting with bitter joy to spread  
across the ready tongue in the next room. It is ready,  
you know. Feed. The chocolate room must stay cool,  
yellow loaves down the hall puffing up with cheeks blown  
out to nudge ceiling breast, to curl against it for safety—  
something you have created here, your reign.  
Excellence is mandatory. You will not settle  
for less, nor will you settle.  
Most others have gone for the deep hours  
of this night, to care for fleshy folds,  
to slumber. You leave the lights on  
as you wipe the last counter,  
tucking away today's hours,  
eager for your next course.