

Microscopic Agitation of Molecules

Oh, glassy surface
of lake around which
I walked mere hours ago—
how dutiful my reflection
of thee in this dingy bar
where I, faithful disciple
of the placid, face
a man once dated
with brilliant return
of blue sky. It's clear through
an exchange of pleasantries
how far my loyalty stretches to
evince your calm visage. See
how nothing is shifted by the slight
graze of his fingers along my arm
during a goodbye hug. Witness
the depth of my devotion.

When?

If the present
is this wisp
of exhaust from

an idling truck
in another line
of traffic, must I

ignore
what streams after
my present

company is excluded
in a rush from minivan
to rest stop toilets—

me left
in the presence
of our pup and content

to be harnessed
to a strip
of roadside grass?

If the present
lifting of leg
is indicative

of this entire trip,
I am relieved
to discover

it doesn't continue
forever—
trickling. Quiet

at last comes
as the tires start
to hum the road

and one by one
the children drift off
with nobody remaining

to ask
how far
we have to go.

The Thimblerrigger

She says
the palm-
sized ball, white,

lies buried
in this toy chest.
We are at sea,

my 3-year-old niece
and me, searching
the depths

for the treasure.
Our boat, life,
she swamps

in salty tears
as I sift the parts
of Mr. Potato

Head, endless
Lincoln Logs and Legos,
various colors

of rubber duckies.
I move this
around that

until my fingers walk
the smooth planks
at the bottom

of the box.
My sleeves rolled
and rippling

at the elbows
have nothing
to hide. Unlike

the Easy Bake Oven,
its door later lifted
in a discovery

of hot orb
(mostly melted),
and my niece

now disappeared—
never to reveal
her secrets.

A Bloom of Thorn

These earbuds,
fully charged
with my attention,
fail to open
their delicate folds
of color and tone.

Balling
my fingers into fists
I resist the silence
with repeated poundings
as if to make the case
free its secrets, music
hidden in darkness.

But the moment passes
in another turning,
a record released
from its sleeve
and needled in a bleed
sounding sodden
from a too wet spring,
the damp basement, a warp
of time worm-holing me
into disappointment.

Toilet Stall Coat Hook

O, inverted cobra
of silver scales,
what played tune
has raised you

from this flat
resin basket
and focused
your slit

eyes on me
one of which
appears loose
by at least a quarter-

turn, I assume
to make space
for consuming
he who next gazes

upon you half-
eyed or worse
as a friendly pachyderm
with her uplifted

trunk and entreating
smile. I will not
beseech you
with the swirl
of a sounding flute, bend
you to my will;
rather, it is I
who am stilled, caught

by your tail—its well-shined
welcome from Kilroy,
Paul92, and all
who came before.