

Lucida

When I pass that old building
past Monroe on Roberts
with the spray painted loading bays
and boarded doors, the flagless
flagpoles and grasses massing
in the massive parking lot, I think
first about the scenes preceding
the breaking of the windows.

Which kid threw what? I'd love to arc
a hammer gleaming into the echoing
interior through that checkerboard
of panes. Inside and ages ago,
middle managers called off for funerals.
The receptionist took delivery
of some posies, let them
linger on her desk for an hour.
Whatever was done didn't work.
Evenings for a time they fled
their interconnectedness
for home, related the day's
idiocies from every angle
to spouses and children or
to no one. All those stories
anthologized make the place
plus the window breakers,
the squatters, the looters,
the drunk walking home
pausing and weighing a brick,
looking up at the constellations
and losing interest. I don't
know their names either.

I don't know what they did there
anymore than what it mattered.
I like to think it means both something
specific to each and unknowable
to all, so that I might rise from my own desk
and enter the conference room
where I work and see its window too
as one moment of superlative
joy, the chunk of asphalt rising
towards the ghost of what
I might still do.

Little Cacophonies

1

The buds hum their individual
notes until they open. The harmony
disrobes, petal by petal. Woodpecker.

2

I'm unaware of essentially everything
that gets said. That's just this
second. Every language ever's inconceivable.

3

Like a cloud, the blue whale
hangs above us in silence. In the museum
of clouds the headphones play thunder.

4

The dog hears the bats. What hears
a worm? When I hear a beetle
in a nature show I see a man with sandpaper.

5

All night, in the dark, in the dining room
of the restaurant the utensils hold their breath.
While the coffee drips, the knives are sharpened.

Old Photos

More like a warm voice sharing a secret,

[Less like a gun going off inadvertently]

[Less like a mo-ped being winterized]

[Less like the eulogy of a reclusive uncle]

Any sunny morning handles our January

[Assuming the mayorhood after Daly dies at his desk]

[Mayor Bilandic's labor problems (gravediggers, opera, etc.)]

[barely register compared to his failures during the blizzard of '78]

Graciously, intently, and lends the piles of shoveled snow

[There is a picture of me on a sled at 2 years old]

[250 miles to the East, in Toledo, during the same blizzard]

[though my memory of it being taken must be invented]

A quality of disorganized interiority, which is functional,

[The unlikelihood is buffeted by disbelief.]

[Then the wind dies down. Take the quiet that attends]

[a moonless night and graft it to the blinding snow]

But unintended, I think, in the same way, a change

[more matters the way a missed sign does,]

[or the way misinterpretation turns and]

[turns like a ballerina in a jewelry box]

in weather is devoid of meaning, but meaningful nevertheless.

[You'd really try to get it right]

[Film was expensive and limited and you gave it]

[to a stranger to develop]

As It Happens

The gap between the falling snow
and my understanding of it
as fact is slim. It's snowing.

Walking home down Leland
I know which dogs rail daily
at my personage and which don't.

I'm jealous they never lose interest.
Along the fence, the path worn in the grass
for patrolling is redug in snow.

They scare me if I am, as an
example, enjoying the falling snow
and maybe disposing myself

towards kindness. I think they have
no feelings but simply know how
to interpret ours. So when the Chow

lunges barking from behind the hedge,
it's my presence I lament. Black
tongue. Snow falling into her

black coat. We're maybe six inches
apart. At that distance it takes a second
for my surprise to turn from fear to rage.

But that's behind me now. I try
to notice the snow again. It's
snowing. How will I escape myself?

Alternate Ending

Everyone lives, but there are
no survivors. Drills prepare one
for other drills. The black smoke
strokes into the lungs like a jellyfish
and the fire alarm too sounds underwater.
But not most of us. We recalibrate
the pitching machines crying a little
on and off. Thwump. With the neighbor boy's
stethoscope, we'd listen to our cat's heartbeat.
There was nothing to do with this new information
but offer fantastic, inescapable diagnoses.
That summer I returned to a weathered Penthouse
I'd found on the banks of the Maumee River often.
How could something so precious be discarded?
I thought, evincing my innocence.
Despite repeated advice to the contrary, the ball
was precisely a thing to fear, and a symbol
of other things to fear. Why ignore
the obvious? Thwump. Maybe
nursing inside me heroically
something wrong. I'd listen to my own heartbeat
afraid it might stop. Blotted with bruises.
Later I learned that everything crests
then settles into its inevitable aftermath,
which is how we stay what we call alive.