

Shine

The day seemed strangely
out of context, black and white
as our hearts. We hated the smell
of sunlight in the alleys, the ruined
voices on TV. We couldn't read
between the lines. We craved
meaning and sleep, a hole
swallowing a hole.
Elsewhere there were trees,
there were sidewalks
and food. We had music and
cigarettes and cars, the ownership
of light and noise, loneliness, air.
As if a boy had smashed open
all the windows. As if
the ashen sky meant rain
and nothing more. At night
we saw dogs rooting in the shadows,
and men walking in the cold,
their hands drifting out of warm
pockets reaching for what? Solace?
A match? Imagine something
shines in the dark and something
moves towards that small
brightness. Haven't you
ever touched someone
in just that way?

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Hearing the News

It is like fire.
It is a kind of burning.
Silence moves through it
like breath. It goes nowhere.
Where it begins it
ends, a notion surrounding
itself like a ring of flame.
It is nothing you have not heard before.
It is the essence of sound.
Imagine yourself there, not
there. It is the light falling
without you through trees
whose voicelessness
embodies the idea of you,
a burning thing among trees.
The way without you nothing
speaks and nothing
answers. Someone who is not
named, who is not there. Or
something that falls and is
not heard for many years,
but whose name is a constant,
a whisper of itself
among trees. The way
a child might imagine his own
death, distant and luminous
as a star. And burning.

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The Road Back

All she asked for was a clean
shirt and quiet and a safe place to land.

All she asked for was a window
overlooking a stream, some
railroad tracks, or a road
a stone's throw from anywhere.

All she wanted was a good book
like an island and a steaming
bowl of rice, white clouds
in the alley, white
stone lifted from her mouth.

A song, a boat, a way of going.

All she wanted was a field,
and snowmelt, and a river,
and the wisdom of sparrows
in the yard, their brief
precarious histories like a promise
no one expects to keep.

And all she wanted was a clean slate
of sky like a freshly washed
handkerchief, a brightness
she could taste on her tongue,
and soft dirt, and a hillside,
and hands to let go.

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