

## In My Career of Innocence

One of the minor joys in life is when there's a real reason why I can't do this thing I didn't want to do. Emergency at home, so sorry I couldn't go, and who's to say I'm lying? In the way that circles around your head mean you're dizzy or you're a saint, or maybe both, it's another thing that simply is. Like accidents, or carefully crowded schedules, make an incense you can back into like how highway traffic starts to sound like a river churning, in a pleasant mid-tempo pastoral. It's reasons why I can't think, unless it's reasons why this is what I'm thinking about, crowding out all that other stuff, which might've been better, more interesting stuff, but who's to know now? There's a residue of what some of it might've been, like this note I left myself in the middle of the night last night that I'm looking at this morning, indecipherable and present, clear, like what a mannequin might look like passing aisles in a grocery store, yelling from a radio in the cart that it's come for stuff, does anyone know where the stuff is, or the concept of these two parades, called An Abundance of Caution and Don't Tell Me What To Do Fucker, meet. Maybe it's the concept of parades that's the shock. If I was thinking, perhaps I'd think about that, but I'm sorry, there's this unavoidable thing that happens, this note, or bug in my eye, oh, look at the time.

## Sun On Windows, Sun Across Grass

First we see the sun, and then we have a sun god. It's a pretty straightforward proposition. The sun polishes the cars in front of you, behind you. Kisses the windshields. I get it. A little of this, a little of that, plus the sun god. Otherwise, you're staring straight at nothing. Life is fragile. Or you're staring at your hands, saying life is resilient. You're an artist now, and you reach to draw it, you feel the spirit rising, but then it's all about the difficulty in drawing noses. So you add the sun. Now you have shadow spilling across the landscape, highlighting and erasing, lifting one thing from another and then pushing everything to one. Now you have a philosophy, you're a philosopher. Tomorrow, when it starts again, you're the comeback kid. Yesterday I was down. I was burying myself invisibly. And this morning, the sun brought a fog up around the house nestled in veils. I'm giddy with it. A mysterious human skulking windows, waving. It's the experimental phase of the world. There's this story I read years ago where these two handcuff themselves to each other, because the world keeps revising, replacing things. They're out driving, at the end of the story, and it's a beautiful spring afternoon through the car window, until one of them rolls their window down, and they see it's all mist and moaning, so they roll the window up fast, go home. It's how we protect ourselves, how sometimes we say "Bless my limitations." It's how we can see people who look like us everywhere. It's in the eyes, the sun. It's the light. And then it's in what holds the light.

## Many Rooms, One House

One of the symptoms of a heart attack, I'm reading, because I've just had this shooting pain up my left arm and I've heard something like that might signal a heart attack, is a "feeling of impending doom." I think that pretty much sums things up. Having a birthday? [Insert feeling of impending doom.] Request for a meeting with your boss? It's obvious. So I search "panic attack" and find "feeling of impending doom." So I search "feeling of impending doom" and find "What does it mean when you have a feeling of impending doom?" Then it's "What does a sense of impending doom feel like?" It fills books, doctor's offices, elections. It fills casinos and bars, churches and Tinder profiles. It's an existential palindrome, like today, 02/02/2020, first palindrome day in something like 13.5 billion years. Like looking through a telescope and seeing an asteroid growing larger. Here it comes. Or else it's an acorn falling from the tree you're standing under, and it's your perspective that's off, and how that, too, is impending doom, as "a rose by another name" is an example of a foreign language, which is a feeling of impending doom. And I'm not saying it's not. Or that this isn't true. One doesn't know these things. One just thinks about them, going out into the parade and circling things you see with a marker. "Why do I wake up with a feeling of impending doom?" when really it's "How can some people wake up without a feeling of impending doom?" It's like waking up from a dream of your house on fire only to find your house on fire, that we make jokes in the ambulance. That we enter the contagion ward, saying "Gimmie a hug, Sweetie." That we set up our instruments on the battlefield and play our hearts out.

# The Moon You Hold in Your Mind

While a coin is spinning it looks like a globe. When I get serious,  
I'll make a philosophy out of that. It'll be called Every Year  
Is the Year of the Rat, and while that's not true, the fact  
that it's not true will prove it to be even more true,  
at a deeper level. The way one gets good at imagining things.  
Like how many people will live in this house  
before this house is no more. A little bit of the future  
to balance the idea of the past. It's important to forget,  
because it's only an approximation. They'll do the tidying up  
later, with Ptolemaic epicycles and crash barriers. We call it  
Unfolding Moment, and you're an explorer stepping out  
into new worlds, planting flags. But the other worlds  
won't stay put, they jostle, clattering in the dark, keeping us  
awake, as there is a further remove, a movement in silence,  
that prowls behind all others, this little moon nightlight  
circling your ceiling, always there in its absence.  
It's because there are different sizes of infinities,  
and, as that seems a distinction without a difference,  
like wearing a cross necklace when you're not religious,  
just, you know, it's a cool design, it'll be top of my list of things  
to add to *The Book of Common Knowledge, Vol 2*,  
one of these days, when I get serious about this. Because it's  
important to be serious, to acknowledge the difficulty,  
to say The Only Difficulty Is, Pt 3. About this, we carry  
our rotary phones and grief, our munitions and divinations,  
saying "much remains to be discovered," which could be  
anyone anywhere, where you're a human resources generalist,  
saying "the only difficulty is," as it's right now, this moment,  
watching the sky turn to sand, and then walking in sand.

# Someone Pop a Balloon So We Can Hear What This Place Sounds Like

So what if I'm jealous of all the beautiful things?  
Who wouldn't want to be every beautiful thing? Sweat  
lavender. Creatures that glow. We rub flowers over ourselves.  
We wear animals. Or fake animals. And then it's me  
walking around the house saying "What is it? What is it?"  
and I don't know what I'm asking, only that I want out  
of myself. And people are always correcting me, telling me  
what I'm feeling is envy anyway. We make up feelings  
for each other, along with new names. Fido. Extra Grim.  
Currently, I'm this playlist, the way I'd listen to music  
when I was fourteen, head lying on the radio, radio pillow,  
thinking of people I wanted to be. Have goals, they say.  
Be the goal. Buy a joke book. Practice in front of the mirror.  
The room crowds with lovers. Either the room is a fantasy  
or the lover is. Maybe it's the room's fantasy and we're just  
what happens to be there. Be the spice rack. Manage  
this avalanche of alarms from the future. Be the human  
skeleton found on the famed Antikythera shipwreck.  
Because everything's an accident. Mountain lions  
are attacking little girls, only to be thwarted by a punch  
in the nose from a quick-thinking passerby. Beautiful passerby.  
Maybe not even burly. Maybe not even adrenaline-filled  
or wanting it, but maybe forever now jealous of every  
beautiful thing left, beauty that you pass through,  
beauty that rises up around you and falls apart at the touch.

## What's the New Shalalala?

Early on in the lockdown, I had to go to the dentist. I broke a tooth a couple months before, drinking a glass of water. It wasn't even cold water. And poof. So here I am at the dentist. And the dentist is saying they've practiced all their lives for this. Their protocols have protocols. The protocols of their protocols have protocols. Because people have been lying to dentists about their health for years. To dentists, we all have hepatitis. It's a story about expectation. Like when you're overhearing the award winner, thanking God and their manager. You don't have access to the resources they have. Maybe you get a minor angel or something. And they don't want to think that. They want to think they're doing better on their own and earning these things, because maybe they are working hard for these things that are coming to them. But to even imagine otherwise, they'd have to face the thumb that's being placed on the scale, which would first, make them feel bad, and second, maybe make them feel some kind of responsibility for the scale, which might lead to doing something about it, and maybe they wouldn't get so much anymore, and they rather like getting things. Wouldn't you? And really, I'm just wanting my tooth fixed, but I get it, yeah. But I still have to figure out \$1,250, credit cards accepted. The person talking a cubicle over is imagining a coupon, a half off coupon somewhere, and it was mentioned on the radio. I want to live forever, I tell the dentist. I say this in all sincerity. The way a child hides by placing you where they can't see you, I want to live forever. And in the way a child is always easy to find, jutting from behind a tree or half closed cabinet, I hope this is a game and that soon we'll laugh and spin one more time.

## D'une Part, Il Faut Savoir que la Température Chute

My goal in life is to say something inexplicable as I'm dying,  
and making it awkward for everyone. I feel there's  
an evolutionary advantage to that. Was it a joke? A sled? Not  
in the moment, as that will be too late, but in the build-up, having that  
as an intention. A good attitude to carry. Healthy mindset. Otherwise,  
I'm just wanting something and I don't know what. Otherwise,  
I wander the house talking to myself, wishing people would leave  
so I could talk louder to myself. Maybe even scream  
to myself. Do impressions of famous screams in history.  
WHAT'S THE NEWS, I can shout. And then be all like, who's asking?

We're on a plane. The plane's coming in for a landing.  
But wait, this is the moon, I say. And the plane passes right through.  
I can't stop thinking this thought. It circles. And I want to turn  
it off. But there is no off. Like how they had guesses,  
but they didn't really know, how solid the moon was  
before the Apollo landing. Some people thought the lunar lander  
might sink. How far, was the question. And how far,  
as in "how far will this go" continues to be the question.

I'm just trying to survive. Help me up. Maybe I've fallen.  
Maybe it just looks that way, and this is a form of travel. That this feeling  
is how one gets somewhere, passing through layers.  
The way people might not have understood their own  
internal monologue around the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BC, as recounted  
by the voices of the gods talking to people in the Trojan War.  
I might be having this thought, but I might not be me  
having this thought, but instead the whisper of Athena.  
The devil made me do it, as Flip Wilson says in the guise of Geraldine.  
It's part three of some idea of how consciousness arises  
from non-conscious materials, and the idea that there is no such thing  
as non-conscious, which solves one problem by posing another.  
The one and only taste, smell, touch, etc, of the bay at night,  
west wind, holding open a door  
for no one you know. Dear song, here's how I think about it.