

Architecture Problem (*Poseidon Adventure*)

Because the world is always flipping, and I knew it then, too,
like any of us know it now, we lie in bed (OK, I do)
and look at the ceiling imagining the version when
it's now the floor, and how do I navigate the popcorn,
stepping over door frames. It's my *Poseidon Adventure*, capsized
and filling up, as any house a child grows up in, folded
in Dutch angles. Does anyone even mention that movie anymore?
How in the capsized world, it's good to be in the middle,
which isn't the point, but it got me thinking,
and better, to always carry a welding torch.
Like the difference between things that no longer exist
and those that never existed, and the similarities. Like Pan
American airlines and the golden age of America.
Trigger warning: You're going to dream.

When the house flips, there's quite a leap down the stairs
to the second floor. That's a continuing problem,
especially when no one else in the house notices,
and they're all lah-dee-dah walking around above me,
from one perspective. The one that matters.
The conceptual one, that we save for long nights.
This is what the *Poseidon Adventure* was like, and a reminder
to zig when everyone else zags, which perhaps
I've taken a bit too much to heart. It's not easy,
watching the world flipping all the time. I get it.
One is never completely safe. I wanted only
to imagine it. I repeat that, as the chirping
continues outside between the crickets and the birds,
with your several pasts and murky futures.

National Holiday Poem

Maybe there's a problem with the roof. Is there a problem with the roof? Is it sagging? Is it starting to seem like a place with a future we no longer want to be a part of? Do I mean "roof" even, or am I really thinking about capitalism? All the shit in my life making shit out of the shit? One is not supposed to have regrets. So I regret having regrets. I'm studying them through asking questions. It's the difference between simply taking turns speaking and kissing strangers. So we call the roofer. The roofer says "I'll be there Thursday." It's Monday. It's like waiting for "Merry Christmas" on opposite day, when it makes you forget how your body works for a few seconds. Oh July, the anti-Christmas month of long days and short nights, where everyone is smiles and waves thinking "hello world," and "wouldn't it be nice."

This July of everyone jumping into pools and getting married, drinks outside under the kitschy deathray sunsets, the dogs around and around the trees, and their sturdy roofs. Damn sturdy roofs. It's like discomania out there everywhere I'm not. The birds keep reopening and reopening. And it's late afternoon. Something less or greater than. I can stir my coffee until it starts to sound like punctuation. How long for the sound of the birds to sound like birds? The sun is full against patches of bleached grass, the neighbor's cat trotting off to some pressing errand, but not too pressing. Perhaps at some level space and time don't exist, some fundamental beyond that's everywhere and other popping up, but not here. Here, I'm in the corner of the yard in a flowered shirt, chewing dandelions, practicing my trust fall.

the Old Stories, Much Like Ours, Are Wrong

The street sweeper just passed, Tuesday morning, sounding
like a gas leak. I jumped, pretending to be ready to act.
I sprayed a wasp nest by the front window an hour ago.
I can still smell it. It smells like a gas leak. Like the unity
of the senses. As smell memory is the strongest and first,
like mothers smelling the heads of babies
and picking theirs out. Sheep also do that. Another day then,
unity of existence, and life goes on like put-put golf.
A walk would be nice. See the neighbors
and be perfectly maudlin over the condition of the street,
how even the very barking of the dogs
is proclaiming the fall of America.
Like how we're all pretty similar, which sometimes
means hope and sometimes a kind of nausea filling your throat.

The street sweeper just passed again. It's a twofer. It passes
through us and by us, and we call out, "Hey, look."
And I've decided I'm not joking. The way one
can find oneself watching a terribly dumb movie,
and then find oneself crying anyway. It passes, as heavens
pass, what we would have called "heavens"
and now just "stars" or "days," but we mean the same thing,
that look, even together, how singularly these things are
in their passing, as one making it all the way
to the end of the driveway intact, with a caveat
of slight crumbling, but only around the corners of one's eyes,
so that someone can say, "Hey, you look tired," and you
can respond, "Hey, thanks friend." Isn't this why
we cast spells? And isn't this why our spells never work?

I Want Every Bad Habit for the Next Thirty Seconds

The hardware store is going out of business. Up to half off. Everything must go. It's the apocalypse of the hardware store, only to be replaced by a hardware store. Woodruff Arnold is now the Tractor Supply Co, or will be next week at the grand opening. There will be a sale. Up to half off, where what you come across isn't what you had in mind at all, but now it is anyway, and you're at the checkout with a cart full of stuff you barely recognize, or worse, you recognize too well, and all mystery is gone. The good gone mystery of commerce.

I think I'm supposed to meditate on the names of roses now, and how, just as we twist our hands to cast the shadow of a bird on the wall, so too are the birds casting their human shadows over us in the parking lot, arms out.

Soon, I will live in a flip book. It will feel breezy, like we're waving at each other. We might even call it that. I had a friend who didn't want to think about dying, and then he died. And it was slow, I hear. He never told me. He went west, to the coast, as a replacement for talking, a reenactment of the gold rush. Many famous people went west, including outlaws, pioneers and explorers. Annie Oakley. Calamity Jane. Jesse James. Butch Cassidy. There, with their excellent names, and not there, in going and in the idea of going, and all the useless bromides, all the bellicose hours with autumn upon us and our winter skin, with the things we imagined were happening, scented with lilac and crosshatched in the clouds.

It's Community Night in America

There are some pretty weird creatures out there, like dolphins,
who live underwater, but have to breathe air.
If they're as smart as we think they are, they must think about that,
how messed up it is that they need to live in one thing
but make these trips to this other place,
one they otherwise know very little about, to blow and puff
through a hole in their heads and then back down,
over and over. Puffins get all the breaks, they must say,
glancing up on some clear August afternoon off Key West.
No wonder they're interested in boats and people, who also
come and go. "Yes, yes, I get that," they must think.
And neither of us will define ourselves by this, like how
yesterday I had a headache, and when a headache passes
I get this other-world, glowing feeling, divided

along the full right hemisphere of my brain, like someone's
marked it off with a ruler, and along with it
comes this feeling of wanting to tell everyone I love them,
whoever. And yesterday, I was returning
to the world, running on Icon Road, because sometimes
running helps, and when I got to my pickup,
parked at the practice fields, and sat on the tailgate
changing my shoes, and I took off my headphones,
the silence erupts into soccer, football, baseball, some
runners, laughing, a shout, whistle. I could even pick out
my son's voice as his team circled, saying happy birthday
to Will, and I loved everyone, like a dolphin
leaping from the water to breathe, or just to play in the air,
saying "This is the good stuff, where no one can stay."