

Another Story with a Burning Barn in It

I was on the porch pinching back the lobelia
like trimming a great blue head of hair.

We'd just planted the near field, the far one
the day before. I'd never seen it so clear,

so gusty, so overcast, so clear, so calm.
They say pearls must be worn or they lose their luster,

and that morning I happened to remember,
so I put them on for milking, finding some

sympathy, I guess, between the two.
Usually I don't sit down until much later in the day.

The lobelia was curling in the sun. One by one
birds flew off, and that should have been a sign.

Trust is made and broken. I hardly sit down
at all. It was the time of year for luna moths,

but we hadn't had any yet settling on the porch
or hovering above the garden I'd let the wild rose take.

Dream in Which I Love a Third Baseman

At first he seemed a child,
dirt on his lip and the sun
lighting up his hair behind him.

All around us, the hesitation
of year-rounders who know
the warmer air will bring crowds.

No one goes to their therapist
to talk about how happy they are,
but soon I'd be back in the dugout

telling my batting coach how
the view outside my igloo seemed
to be changing, as if the night

sky was all the light there is.
Now, like two babies reaching
through the watery air to touch soft

fingers to soft forehead, like blind fish
sensing a familiar fluttering in the waves,
slowly, by instinct, we became aware.

Off-field, outside the park, beyond
the gates, something was burning.
The smell of it was everywhere.

Windy Today

Intention: clear. Left at the light, straight through the light, stop at the light. Cold air like snow falling, quiet in the parking lot—laundromat neon flickering, yews cut in heroic shapes of balustrades, columns, each one a thousand needled caryatids, faces turned to the ground.

Intention: clear. Little gray clouds trucking overhead under a finer layer of gauzy stuff the sun shines through like a moon. Anything that turns or bows has done so. That which stands straight through it all is left stiff-limbed against the sky. We huddle for warmth as if in a cave made of snow. A bird lives at the center of a cave of its own feathers, little pocket of trapped air.

Intention: muddled. Losing focus at every turn. Pay attention when you're driving. Stop steering with your elbows. The danger for which you keep your hands free has passed; we must prepare for another.

Intention: wait a minute. Breath steams my lenses as if the clouds reach down with their mouths. They fill me like open air.

Intention: careful review. We're on Chapter 17: the Hungarians have offered their canon to the Byzantines; one hundred and fifty thousand Turks camp against their upper banks; they refuse it as they refused surrender and a small kingdom of Greeks; the city is divided, no patriarch sits on the throne. We know what will happen. We've read this chapter before.

Intention: liquid crystal. Snow fills the field, nothing treads upon it, not even the wind. Air hovers, waits. We wait. We'll wait here.