

Little Valley Road

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## **Little Valley Road**

In all of us  
who've been there,

is this Little Valley.  
Here's the road.

**In**

## Via dei Cavalli

‘You’re up early.’

‘Dark apartment,  
but the windows burn like angels.’

‘Those psychopomps say to tip some  
grappa in your coffee?’

‘They said  
no point starting with a dry moat.’

‘Not sure I follow. Though I see the reference  
to those bums we saw sleeping around Castel Sant’Angelo.  
You’re in Rome again this morning, aren’t you?’

‘Seems some part of me is stuck there.  
Wallet-half from the look of my wallet.  
Not sure if I stood up and left it on a plinth,  
maybe a sculpture picked my pocket, but  
half of who I am feels gone now—  
Or different somehow, like I’m a centaur foal  
being raised by a pack of mild humans.’

‘You can kill the horse with booze, you know.’

-Pause-

‘But I’m tired of that. Do you remember Rome?  
It was spring. There were little islands on  
the surface of the Tiber like the tops of knees  
in a draining bath. Above narrow streets in the Borgo  
St. Peter’s flapped in and out of frame  
because of all the Tyrian purple pinned out in the sun.’

‘It’s funny isn’t it? The way that Rome  
still comes at you fast like that, like a bat  
breaking past your head from memory.  
A cathedral ceiling’s fireworks take up once  
the sermon’s fireworks stop. And when  
the ceiling stops, the piazza outside’s  
full of new fruits, vegetables, etymologies.  
Stimulation’s cheap as wine and your horse  
is more than happy to take it in by trough.  
But it flies by so fast it hardly leaves a tick to think!’

'Only just now it's slowed enough to hatch a feeling  
similar to how it is to listen through the dark over my bed  
for a half-caught sound to sound again.  
That given one more chance I could make easy sense of it.'

'It's often I sleepwalk down this subdivision's version  
of the Spanish Steps thinking I left something unnameable  
inside the Trevi. Is that it at the end of the tube-slide? I never know.  
It all gets hazy after the Flaminian gate, though  
I'm absolutely certain I wake up at the refrigerator.  
You're saying Rome's still in us like unfinished business?'

'That's why half of me's still sauntering the cobbles.  
Why not join me? We'll be cavaliers. We'll live possessed  
by the ancient Roman sense that down any old left turn  
suddenly one of our dreams might find its title.'

## Takeoff

Off as a kid  
after the loose kite of a comet,  
and as far away now from others  
as a person in a photo, it's no surprise  
we turn a final time to think of following  
these thoughts back home. From here in the air, we pan  
across the dunes and snag trees into  
the underground of the night.  
O phototrope,  
what plant in us  
believes things like the moon?  
The wisp? Night's diadem glacier  
holding forth over Earth? Or vernal Earth  
holding back its own kite, tail brushing ankles  
on the footpaths of heaven? The moon's a hatch  
slid off what suffers. And through it, too,  
one last new rain endeavors. Below we  
see different harbors taking only  
what the sky would give them.  
Each searchlight strikes the  
fog as a private longing.  
No turnsole curling  
at first mist,  
we turn  
our back, settling in  
and settling on untying  
these horizons in our eyes.  
All lands ahead are Ithaca tonight.  
Tonight the sky's the right place for flight.

## The Stork

You should see the souls these days.  
New-age, they drag their feet.

Selling real-estate, I'm forced  
to fly this new breed all around

showing them the paperwork.  
Test scores. Head shots. Potential names.

All this for what was once a horse  
and now has no idea what concept of beauty

the next world's come together on.  
Some days, I take them over to see

the line of souls becoming dogs.  
Even then they hesitate

like children at the edge of a pool,  
nameless, no swimsweater,

scared to take the head-first dive,  
their parents beckoning:

*Come, come,  
our arms are warm.*

## This is Horse Springs Coulee

Start with, I was a horse once.

Out in the Springs where death is material.  
You should know, that which I call *this*,

the coulee, is a made place.  
Laurasia. Late Triassic. Yellow sky.

A volcano, hunched and buzzing like  
a hand cupping a firefly to a table. The volcano lets its treasure go,

spilling the old straight track the Pleistocene would ice-block down.  
Now, to see these hills carved by

the slow-thrills of an ablating glacier  
and not think of the rubble missing,

is to break ground a unique distance from 0 and 1,  
to make place for things that must disappear to get where they're going.

Take this long fuse of old road out to a votive candle.  
Just as the candle enters its fiction through flame,

so will we hoof it through the Coulee toward what ends us.  
Start with, I was a horse once. The old homestead.

Its dark age peaks its head into the sun and sneezes: "*Dare I make myself clear?  
Fledged meadowlark? Sprouting yellowbell?*"

Poor old creaker settles back into its basement tasting darknesses. The murk inside the apple bins  
could be more lonely; the dusk wrapped up in its dusty blankets hasn't saddened yet.

Until then, this springform of shadow in a ten-gallon hat  
rides atop a sleeping pill corralling the dark age inside its dream.

We walk. We trot. We point, brimming the valley of the vowel of died,  
I was that horse once.

My hooves set down in peat the weight of their moments. The moments, freight  
trucked down long ley lines marked with logan stones.

"*I see you've noticed the earth's loose molars.*" said the water in the stream.  
"*The earth is hungry. If you sleep too long in this valley you might disappear.*"

I filled my pockets with hazelnuts  
and spread whatever worked like a 1:1 map across the Coulee.

I tried saying whatever.  
I tried work.

Tried the out-and-back of a robin with chicks to feed.  
Tried cider. Tried winter chained down on the land.

Tried skinnier. Tried wider.  
Tried, "*The universe curves like paper slid beneath a spider.*"

I'd even retreated into histories when, like a miracle in the East China Sea, I heard:  
"*Say goodbye to fried-egg-on-a-slider-Fridays, boys.*"

*"Fat Man fell.*  
*"The war is over."*

Never looking back, I stepped up into a flood.  
Took damn near two rations of Panamanian beer to believe.

I still remember dousing horizons with gasoline  
to bring to close those four long years of light discipline.

And it was then, in a reckless salvo on the top deck of the minesweeper,  
I saw light finally loosen from its imbrications,

flak diffusing in the air like cranberries baking into bread back home  
and through it a munitions tracer plumbing this course like a long fuse.

It blows open the abstraction of return. Legacy flags forward in the rush.  
Horse-snort sound of the horizons going up around us.

So the votive candles lit; we're in it.  
But know— *this* which you call history isn't.

*This* is a name expanding.

## Tropism

A fern, all neck, leans out the oakwork  
into next year's lot. Strafe of acorns.  
Eggs hatched on the wing and a slow creep  
up the valley after Time knocked down  
its glaciers. Somewhere miracles.  
Networking eternal life, spring  
has put its throw rugs out. Forget-  
me-nots. Anemone and sorrel.  
Wood pigeons come alive again.  
And again, the great sword-  
swallower's apprentice, heron.  
And here comes St. Kevin,  
a pilgrim led by such figures  
of the light as merlins. His angel  
is the glen's song, acorns drumming  
through the leaves. What he grips,  
his shillelagh. What he follows,  
less than a path. Out of festooned  
oaks he scrambles barefoot up a scree  
to where at last he sees the valley's hands  
come together on a river, to where too  
a blackbird will be lead one day to lay its egg  
in the other upturned palms of Glendalough.

## **“Somehow, Somehow,” Says this Coachgun**

‘Through petal-flurry shot from one of early spring’s double-barreled winds,  
I see you. Your white dress streams like the smoke of a gun.’

‘Wow...Thank’s Sis!?! That’s beautiful. I’m not sure what to say.  
I mean, isn’t this wind... relentless? Yikes, sorry.  
Think I’ve been a little down. On our drive here those  
impish railroad tracks whistled from the underpass:  
*So you’re saying there’s a chance you’ll jump.*’

‘Is that true?’

‘Not true enough to worry,  
but it’s too cold to sit on these rocks,  
the wet grass was an overestimated invitation,  
the sun seems just for looks, and the wind—  
the wind has been so sharp, it’s as if all day  
the world honed its half of the conversation  
on a butcher’s steel. Let’s get out of here.’

‘To think the wind wore down the butte  
with that argument.’

‘And now the same wind  
tears our pages from the trees.’

*-A few minutes later-*

‘But surely these petals in the river?’

‘They only shape the calm that drifts away from us.’

‘Then nothing’s going to cheer you up.  
And, truth is, I’ve been holding back too.’

‘Go on.’

‘Now I don’t mean to scare you worse,  
but earlier I saw something in the way the wind  
lingered at the curtains— A little too long to be meaningless.  
Further proof, I think, that this morning was actually  
the same cold dawn we caught a glimpse of in the winter,  
the same cold hands out in our back-40 skeet shooting moons.  
Only now, it grins and lets us think we’ve won.  
Proof that all this truth-beauty-beauty-truth-business  
might be the blown muslin of someone’s dark imagination.  
That soon someone’s going to choose and choose truth

and close this valley like a broke-open shotgun  
and take everything away from us.'

'So then you don't hate me when I say that something in me  
can't help but feel as if—'

'As if we arrived at nothing  
and we drove. I know.'

'Well, good. Well, no... Sis,  
what if we're wrong? What if it's all gentler than that;  
the wind just wanting us to lift our feet because  
it's sweeping up after a blossom festival?

We've been traveling for a long time  
to give up now. Yes, the more I think about it,  
we must be wrong. It's a test in acceptance.  
Surely there is *something* we can learn here in these  
drifting might-have-beens.'

'I say this is what we learn:  
Being alive means we can live no longer  
on just this image of the apricot trees  
double-stuffed with blossoms. That through all this  
happy falling-off we must harden up our centers  
and truck away what has been forbidden into dreams.'

'And then surely we are, at last, at least, to savor  
this final quilt spread out below us like a memory,  
like the perfect reflection of an older, riven sky?'

'See it dump another load of blossoms in the river  
when you said that? No, that's it. It isn't listening.  
The early grin's a groan's a growl now.  
You hear that Wind!? You might make her cry,  
but it's just a little shift to see you  
chained in these trees like an old hound  
and US with the shotgun! We're here all the way  
from Tombstone; If we want to stay, we'll stay.  
Mark my 10-gauge side-by-side or I'll shoot.  
Somehow blossoms. -Click-Click- Somehow stonefruit.'

## Ode to It

In *Who is it?* who's the problem.  
It we want to have or have coming.  
(Either way we have it coming.)

Before all we knew of it  
were the lengths to which men were willing.  
It was Helen under rusting magnolias.  
It was smoked nostalgia over barrellfire.

Now it may just be  
the decisive piece of evidence  
that emerges from a melting spring:  
trickling in by ankle, we see a rifle  
once had it in a reticle.

When we look later in our little net,  
hoping to make a case of it,  
we find again that it bled out  
in our addendums, our serial days.

But we don't paint over it just yet,  
even if it feels like graffiti on our concrete sky.  
Instead, we let us let it be  
the grammars of waiting.  
Then we wait for it.  
Then tell me who it is we're waiting for.

## Charm for Love in Two Voices: Eiffel

'One thing leads to another.'

'One looseblown kite returns a lover.'

'If love is loss's lucky neighbor,  
tear down the Eiffel tower.'

'Dam the lampposts irrigating night.  
Hew this magnolia tree and light  
the furnace called forgetting.'

'This eventide can fold its wings.'

'That the champagne flutes are rings  
of plastic needn't feature in our exposure.'

'Let the sculptures crumble like Roquefort.  
Detonate that ball-court's bouncing lung of summer.'

'And plumb these crowds with antimatter.'

'And for God's sake, power down  
these flowers, these floodlights of smell,  
these shrapnel bursts of color.'

'Slot a puck of darkness in the moon above.'

'Now one spark of kiss lights off  
a whole world thrown away on love.'

## Fire Ecology

'I don't know, just thought you'd want to hear  
about some burls. Rondure. Grandeur. Picture  
the bulge of a cat digesting in a boa constrictor.  
Like that, but bloating all across the oak savanna.'

'Oh please! Whiskey's what I think.'

'You know, we have walked three whole miles tonight.'

'But the point was spending time together.  
To follow our noses down a green street,  
down this chain reaction of mown lawns  
effervescing in the first decent evening  
of an otherwise dreary spring— Not drink.'

'Around about that parking lot I got to thinking's all.  
On the oak savanna? Something about  
the first flowering trilliums, how they must  
flap in the wind like the hem of that white dress  
caught in the car door.'

'Don't get cute.  
You ended up at how they burn down those  
savannas all the time to keep them healthy.  
That's romance?'

'My mind just jumps around like that.  
And not so fast, you've waxed matters too.  
The highlights remember? You said they looked  
painted on the fern with antifreeze? And also  
how you could tell the grass was still a little wet  
from the way it fell like a drunk out of the mower bag.'

'I'm just saying, it's great out here tonight  
and we always, always end up somewhere pointless  
like last night's lengthy dispensation on  
the psychology of the fisherman's lie.  
Or how laughable and fake you found the confident posture  
of that man wearing his python at the bus stop.  
Or, my favorite from the whole year, telling baby Jimmy:  
*Santa speeds around at Mach- Ho Ho Ho.*  
Always ideas with no connection to the world.  
No stakes. You can't do anything with them.'

That's why our conversations never make me  
feel *anything* anymore. And it's the same thing  
again tonight, *burls make great bowls*.  
Imagine my surprise to learn they're even  
some sort of malignant new growth squeezed up evil's wringer.  
I don't know what I'm supposed to do with that—  
With *us*.

‘Ok, now I admit,  
that bit about the bodies in the peat bog,  
I was a fool to try and describe the smell.  
But burls, burls, they do have a use. Burls really  
make great bowls. Strong, durable, alive once.  
They claim a space. They hold in the ephemeral.  
Though if you saw one un-carved you'd think  
it looked more like an exercise ball for a climbing bear.  
Or maybe a rest bench put in half-way to the honey.’

‘See?’

‘But think, right about now  
dusk's undressing the savanna; all around are  
its thrown away colors. The bears asleep on burls.  
The burls at our shoulders like low moons.  
Private moons. And there would be a dew  
nestling in all the trilliums that surround  
the closing bloom of our campfire.  
You'd look at me and, like always, say  
*So what?* And I'd, like always, say  
the dew too wants to settle in for yet another night of kissing.’

## This Is Horse Springs Coulee

I was a horse once

But THAT was a love poem.  
A fiction topped up to the brim with words.

And with care, even above the brim. A singles cruise. The ads:  
*"Noah's Ark holds one true love for everyone."*

*"You work the combos; Our staff serve cocktails garnished with pink from Gauguin paintings."*

Like the Bathers, who from every angle refute those seeking to demean the body.  
*"It's 70% water."* Well, that's what it holds, but really it's all form.

A form to be the counterweight that keeps desire from ever touching down.  
*Ping. Ping. Ping.*

The Bathers reach over the brim and tap the stained glass of reality:  
*"Hey you out there! You haven't made our asses look good."*

Their asses looked good and they knew it.  
Careful though. One wee blazon can land you anywhere.

There's a reason why the signs read: *"Caution: Slippery when wet with Love."*  
If we take a moment for the gutter to join us on the snow slopes of language

we'll see that, here, any nudge and love shoves off the knife-ridge of the everyday,  
and sends two lugging, prone and supine, toward cliché.

Crossing snowfields, we'll have no choice but to plot our steps along each axis deliberately,  
and without ice-axes. Equation One, carved into a tree:

This = Now + Here + It  
It's sledtracks stretched out behind as the persisting threads of us.  
Snow settles in performing the various hidden erasures of our memory until

Equation Two: This = Now + You.  
*Now THIS is a love poem.*  
The minutes swing by like chairs on a chairlift, pausing to ask us up, then leaving empty.

We're busy in a slow subtraction toward one self. A linguistic regression lugging headlong toward  
*"I = You."* Print that. A tattoo on a cascade.

This = Two shadows planted like one flag.  
But then a fog horn blows. But then the fictive layers peel in cabin music.

And there *You* stands, after all, disrobed for a quick blazon.  
The blanket falls away from all manners of crest, all meanings of chevron.

Sweaters peel up screens. Survey the gully's mid riff, eskers' ribs, the slight draw up a sternum.  
The inch-long lightning in the dark before the thunder of the breasts.

Dear thunder,  
lost in the echo of your vision, in your hologram of sound,

could we foresee the stagehands hosing rain in from offscreen?  
The sky's giant melting ice-sheet. Spring's uncorked clepsydras dribbling down.

The nighthawk loam flown out from under us. Pulled like a rug.  
Our yellowbells washed away in this flashflooding of the heart?

The flume brims over. Our bottled message might not make it down to town.  
Instead, the goodbye kiss of an aubade runs over in a heart's canteen.

We notice a new sign above the cruise ship's trough-style urinal: "Caution:  
*"Beware two humans in a horse suit. It's perilous how they saunter as an equal sign."*

This tingling in my hands is proof either I'm drunk or a sudden death has liberated winter.  
Sure, any gold ring proves the myth, even those pitched in the sluice.

But pin a boutonniere too deep, pretend the body's map sprouts roses,  
and soon you're left with heaving meantime, red ribbon streaming from your leaky heart.

And look, the map too is pricked with holes. The shady nighthawk's squinting in the light.  
Reader, we were better off with the Bathers. Now our pink fingers are in this basin

like a young boy washing his broken glow-stick down the drain.  
What could happen to anyone happened to us.

A rainbow rings the basin's loss.

## Ode to It

In *Where is it?* when's the problem.  
This doesn't mean it's Greek to me.  
Though I guess it was there  
the night the roof caved at the Parthenon  
and gods bivouacked beneath the stars.

Right place: Embankments  
roll out the concept to their berms.  
Right time: Lovers flower  
into the specifics of the field.

And for awhile it vacations  
in the means of real nouns.  
Real hips. Lips. Whips.  
Credit and debit get busy  
editing our karma.  
But it can't help but be a real ass.  
A real dick. So it hits 'em where it hurts.  
And when it's the rub, it rubs it in.  
Finished balancing the books, zero puts a ring around it.

Put a sock in it, we say, it's not your crotch.  
Just beat it, we say.  
Just do it. Do-it-yourself  
fishbone clouds sprayed with aluminum.  
That's it. That's the problem.  
Problem, get away.  
But I bet it's just a tick till that seems strange. That's just it  
with longer range.

## Shorts

### 1. Barber

Blow-dryer  
on all night.  
Trees green again.

### 2. Crowd

Like two moths  
separated in the snow.

### 3. Moths

Thrown switch in the entryway.  
Outside, the porchlight  
vacuums up confetti.

### 4. In

And still a good book by  
the fire. Our little chimney  
snorkeling smoke above the snow.

## Aubade

What pleasure this is  
waking up into the world.  
Seeing out the window  
something burns on  
inside the morningstar  
that's covering the shift  
of a hungover sky.

What pleasure at the front door  
hearing this old door-hinge match  
the high note of the tub's turned faucet.  
Then the tub filling.  
Then the day filling.  
But O the sound  
of a body's worth  
spilling over on the tile.

## This Is Horse Springs Coulee

I was a horse once. Smoking cigarettes.

Talkin' Bakhtin. Sharing a rented gang-plank with Odysseus.  
He liked to stylize his memory as a dark tide hauling wreckage in.

Mostly I'd just listen to the conch shells someone strung like soup cans to the sea.  
It wasn't until I chose untasted ichors over the honey dripping from the eaves

that old symbols felt like deadweight on the lifting bags  
I planned to use to excavate my shipwrecks. Now it's atlas,

cutlass, daily life's *my* odyssey around this ancient reef.  
They call me Ishmare.

Each horizon says "C'Mere" then slowly backs away.  
All sea-cliffs send back my greetings like undercooked meat.

Makes me feel more like a donkey in a world of direct comparisons.  
Like these meteors at dusk that, when touched to tailspin from orbit,

can't escape my comparison to a match-tip scraped into the abrasion of the sky.  
They're auspice of a hustled go-between through night's candelabrum.

Lit stars and God's burnt finger tips? The spent match lands in Minnesota.  
Its legacy's in the museum. To be a part of the night sky's paraphrase.

To be trapped indoors while elsewhere its uranium love half-lives toward lead.  
And these days half-life into those days.

Let's make this about me. Even with a wheelhouse full of dreams  
and salmon scooped up in the seines of sleep,

guess how many times I had to break down love's muscle  
before it didn't come back stronger. Or stranger. A stranger.

Sigh. Skim through the sexual massacre... To here, a salesperson.  
Here, a man-sized St. Bernard. These id-only superheroes follow me wherever I go.

Just like the world. But who am I to spend the universe on an ode  
with Jesus rigged on those spars like a sail that would fly us to salvation,

all Jerusalem his ship.  
You don't say. The latest bloodtest came back dead?

My last words spilled like spinnakers into the wind?  
Who knew the "I" was risky? Says here that,

*Never going home, he watched from benches in the park.  
Unmissed and sipping whisky, he pined for the verbs he'd fenced,*

*then died in the preferred fashion of narcissists, alone.  
Spread out in blankets, seems "Love" too was lost.*

*Beside its treasured wicker picnic basket,  
Love checked its phone to grasp why no personal pronouns came,*

*then wilted into bitterness and died cursing what the wine cost.  
And then there's "You."*

*YOU! YOU! YOU! now aimless, accused others.  
Pointed fingers at the pigeons which refused to leave the trail of crumbs Love left,*

*until You choked to death at a sausage cart.  
Sheesh. Hotdog in one hand, a cigarette the other,*

now my mind on deck, my captain, my troubled man,  
looks down at the cigarette and ponders the poetry of flung things.

He ponders all the concepts out of place.  
To analyze a metaphor, he decides, still looking at the cigarette,

is to stand in the echoes of our own mind and recognize a death.  
A cigarette's slow bend along an arc of narrative,

its bright burned moment burning down and the ashes turning into *this*.  
Just read this postcard from Odysseus: "*Beauty itself, this*

*"blue man waving from the storage locker we call the sea.  
"If my wreckage returns, please press a conch shell to my ear*

*"like a defibrillator. What it whispers brings me back to love."*

## **Bindlestiff's Blessing**

And that's not all.  
May your memory go on  
collecting samples,  
picking simples,  
turning each new stone  
to toss a specimen  
of the beetle cathedral's dark  
into your sack.  
And that's not all.  
File away  
a forensic study  
of this summer lung.  
And wing-deep  
in dragonflies,  
take a cutting  
from the kite-sun.  
And take a swab  
from the sticky chute  
of evening that  
stretched on so long  
it burst into a lily.  
And anymore, it will be  
all you can do to drag  
the sack behind you.  
And that's not all.

-for *RK*

## A Minnow

So it is with a minnow. Seedball in the stomach  
of concentric fish. So goes the birth that calls to work  
one of the many spirits sleeping in the slow bend of the river.  
Another turns into a wind and leaves its bags packed  
at the edge of the fen. That wind runs free on credit cards.  
Another spirit helps a man with no voice tell his story  
the same way the blind fill up with visions.  
And so it is where two mole tunnels meet  
beneath the prairie. The flatness above them  
makes a trucker daydream. The flatness above them  
the result of one of the creator's daydreams.  
Yes, where two mole tunnels meet there is  
a whispering campaign. So it is the pauses  
falling from some fishermen's conversation turn again  
to little silences held up on the plates of lily pads.  
The caught language muscled with metaphors.  
And so it runs up the spine of silence-loving memory.  
The rootballs fruiting alluvium up into coconuts,  
those floating jugs of milk like ghosts boiling in a fire signal.  
They live now in the smoke of feelings. So it is with a minnow.

## This Is Horse Springs Coulee

I was a horse once. Trying to understand from the stomach of a whale.

Now I'm crazier than that. And let me tell you, living in the stomach of a whale sure hurts my parties. Only ghosts show up.

They never do things I find surprising.  
Yo Mama jokes. Killing Kennedys. Screaming the old frayed rope of threnody.

These guys are all a little 'abstract,' if you know what I mean. Especially this one saying:  
*"My scholarship's on the gerontology of blankets. More specifically*

*"how their retirement plans cover picnics and the beach." Oh yeah?! "Did you know  
"they often ride in the dark space behind people? Crammed there in the trunks of cars,*

*"they pass event horizons. Like beachballs, whole decades of their lives deflate,  
"crushed down into singular memories. A fondness. Or a failure.*

*"Or just a name their children know and think one day to call their own."*

Well that's uncomfortable. And totally spoony if you ask me. That's no retirement!

That's collapsing like cotton candy in a sprinkler.  
You'd think this guy would know the dump trucks only show up to cart away the old back-40

when they secure permits to backfill the volcano again. And this donation drive's to buy  
an old leather jacket to use AS the latest bovine skin graft. *"I thought that was obvious."*

See, when starting any branding-iron in the fire, one must begin with the living flesh of days.  
Obviously with a sunrise like a barn door opening. Goats running out into the hills.

We cut the umbilicals just above *I can't, but I have to*. Tip the pregnant mother's hourglass  
when the baby's up to its neck in sand falling from the sky. It's a boy!

Here, little guy, take this and git. It's a credit card to use in the event of an emergency.  
Handsome, eh? On long walks to school, he'll think: *"Art's an inner wish immortalized."*

And Professor, it's got nothing to do with earning him a name in the afterlife when I say:  
'Welcome to Harm's Way.' In fact, there's even a little song going nowhere on the roadside:

*"I've seen London, I've seen France."* And Freudians, I don't set out  
to silence the whispering penis! You claim it's crouched in the shape of every pen. Is

that even possible? I mean, I accept that he'll be to: *"Two shadows sneak into the sun for a kiss"*  
as his old man is to: *"I bet she's flexible."* But you see, Whale and I,

we live in stories. In those summer nights when, eager for privacy,  
my grandparents left the kids at home and went for long drives up into the coulee—

Little blanket of flowers, they didn't swear YOU to a secret did they?  
Still to this day I hear my grandmother— Song of the Western Meadowlark.

What do you mean that's boring? Try floating a few feathers down the flume into the town.  
They'll know it's you.

Meanwhile I'll grab the goats from over in the yellowbells. The sun's paintbrush in their teeth  
reminds me of that time Midas left his fingerprints all across my jungle gym.

Still boring? Well I'll be. Dig a hole and throw blood in it!  
Leave it to a rubbernecking hedonist to wonder why they're going nowhere,

yet still gawk at beauty in the pond at the center of their circular driveway. And I mean  
circular, circular. Like the thumb and forefinger of a boy holding up a snake by the tail.

You can tell his childhood was half BB-Guns and robins, half fire escape of tied T-shirts.  
And what's this ghost mean it's never been so tired of casserole? I'm a horse.

Trapped in the black timpani of Leviathan, I keep time by its monstrous doublestroking heart!  
When life turns tachycharidic I inject barbiturates.

Move aside, Professor. Here come the ghosts again with votive candles:  
*"We dug the biggest hole we could. Some honor, I know.*

*"But we felt certain we could move what once was mortal past the musics of closure.  
"Turned out only the hole could disentangle light from what can be illumined. We stood*

*"in the afterglow of his destructive element... Now, all that's left, temporarily immortal,  
"swallows the pleasure from your whiskey and beer. Clearly as the portal filled, it disappeared.*

*"But what's undone? The wind kept trying new hairstyles while the rain tried one."*

# Out

## Crossing

Sunrise and morning star.  
The dew's a ghost again.  
The inch of whiskey in the mason jar  
is stale like a sermon.

Today's to-do: the old goodbye.  
And after that, who can say?  
So *this* is the place to be  
on our worst day?

We ship to the horizon what Love forgot.  
Float our bottled messages.  
Each spring-loaded sentence is strung taut  
to grief's dulled edges.

A bridge of cobweb sunders.  
An image falls, a missed harpoon.  
Now adrift, the slow ebb wanders.  
Loose sigh-filled balloons.

## Start With Breakfast

'I said butter. A chunk of butter looked  
a little like a glacier when it slalomed through  
your fried eggs on the skillet.'

'This isn't bitter at all'

'Oh dear, you're just an old cuss straining to hear  
through hummingbirds in each ear.'

'If you insist.

I'll explain again this morning, only this time  
in the shapes of glaciers.'

'That's what I made this for?

So much for breakfast.'

'Yes, yes, glaciers are the right metaphor.  
What little's left of one clings to the daily grind  
at the end of its run. And when the world  
first looks back on any of the grand valleys,  
the ones behind the puddles with the pebbles in them,  
it begins at once not to call the spaces vacant.  
Instead it sees—'

'Know what I see?

A thousand days folded up in newspapers  
like your particular rubble of breadcrumbs  
at the end of breakfast.'

'You want the newspaper?

Now use the newspaper for my metaphor?

Ok. But fold your mind up sooner next time.

A newspaper— let's see. Yes, I guess that's  
really no trouble since what I'm trying to say is  
no matter which grand theater we go for during life—  
all the movies feature one ending in general  
despite the credits' and obituaries' tireless work  
to hang its character in the masks of individuals.'

## The Horse

The horse sticks his teeth out. He's a flosser.

The horse lifts his nose up. He smells snow. Several smells  
snow into his nostrils. His aging posture's like a house settling into its foundation.

Sex still sounds good to him.  
He thinks this is some final proof that stories like Love

improve his biological experience of the world.  
You could say he lives in a world with a finished light.

The horse asks the waitress for  
a furlough in grass instead of a glass of merlot.

The horse tells the man calculating on the bridge,  
“*Here* it takes an afternoon, but the sun dries out the pavement.”

So what if some find him a little odd.  
He accepts that.

And he really would consider himself lucky to be brought back to earth for a second tour.  
(Though this doesn't mean he wants to be branded again.)

And this doesn't mean he likes the dog. He wonders why the dog  
watching a wagonload of bricks somehow merits conversation.

The horse sees no harm in telling a colt the casket on his back is full of jail breaks,  
or lunch breaks, or daybreaks. Or that St. Peter is in there counseling the new admission:

“Pack those oversized sunglasses,  
lately Heaven's étouffée has been too bright.”

Which later will be used to clear up why the horse's theory for thunder  
is that it is the head-chef groaning when over-caffeinated patrons say to hold the sauce.

Now it's true the horse sometimes makes mistakes.  
But he's quick to forgive himself for these.

Because he is an honest horse  
most others will forgive him too.

He knows mistakes have a knack for filling rooms  
with what once was unexpected.

The most beautiful thing the horse mistook  
looked different at first from an anvil crashing through the floor of a gazebo.

And always it's been apples,  
apples,

apples that are his weakness, cribbed from trees  
and bursting like good words in the mouth.

This is a weakness he accepts  
for a few tender spots do not bad apples make.

Just like his riders, the horse hides a lot of his memories in the landscape.  
Lately his life has begun to involve a terrible, slow erasure of these memories.

The yellowbells and meadowlarks are flaking paint.  
Most of the barns in Burns where he grew up are wheat fields now.

He'll laugh when asked about this,  
but it will be precisely the kind of bending laugh that ends too quickly.

What began honest proved too painful to finish without thinking,  
"*Even now, what part of my life is being erased?*"

Instead, at his snowed-in front door, shoveling snow back to melt inside the bathtub,  
the horse will recount how he once helped a man to get a girl.

He changed himself.  
He became a two-seater horse.

And despite it all, the man sold him and his saddle for a wedding ring.  
This was tough to swallow. Still, the horse knew by then he was a good horse.

He had to forgive that man too.

## Correspondences

Phatic was the first star. Then came compendiums.  
Came: *Damn shrapnel of wishes*. And so it has come to this,  
dusk's long list to talk down skies.

O lord open your lips. The word comes: Twinkle, twinkle  
little finger in each socket. Lights flicker. Then two arms  
grip, clip, and jumpstart a kaleidoscope of eye-rinse.

How I wonder in cosmic latte, the mean color of the universe.  
Then came: *We want off night-shift*. So it has come to be about  
how I wonder like an electric current diffusing into brackish water.

Then we said: *Pending further review, we have chosen to deny  
your request to be removed from night shift. We include instead  
a new inventory of headlamps.*

A few bubbles burst on the surface.  
Or are those winking clouds? Lip prints twinkling on a letter?  
Does the chiral correspondence of four hands complete a circuit

and power up the long drawn out sentence of morning stars?  
A radio puts static on the shelf. O let there be an old song  
to flip a switch in some museum vault built around the first kiss.

Then came: *In light of the fact that your latest response  
failed to address our safety concern, we were forced to join a union.  
We've gone in with the shadows. Find your headlamps at our old post.*

Then came these days.

## Aubade No

Now aging, Heff presses an icepack to summer's groin.  
Groan. His world whirls as he wonders,  
wanders back to bed the night before. Thoughts peel.  
That spell they cast—was a goodnight kiss?  
Casing her joints before they slept,  
un-slapped he thought both of their wants  
went: *Back soon! Love's a glacier if it's ice.*  
Eyes eased back in tandem to tour  
two parallel museums. Right? His mind formed  
films of their first kiss, silvered.  
Salvos of firing memories. Was he so sure  
she shared them? That the very same reel  
rolled in her body's theater?  
The utterly same movie, just from different angles right?

Right?! Clearly not. Fireside this morning  
mourning, he wonders about  
a bedside (hers) roaring in old flames maybe.  
Maybe worse, some new fire tongue'd will-  
whelp steaming the glacier, come dawn,  
down to a trickle off the heart's  
hearth. Maybe that's why. But how can he know?  
Know why when his lust  
this last dawn commanded his dream's proletariat—  
daring out the darks from their tough lot  
to flood forth and scrub the liar's  
layer of movie off the screen—she'd already left,  
lofting behind her the squall-snows of dopamine?

## At the Bedside of Snow White, A Confident Prince Charming Writes an Ode to Winter, Who Stops Him and Wants to Make a Bet

*Season of hoodwink and lonely tireswings*— Hold it right there.  
It's better you, Charming, and they, your readers, know I find the dogged optimism,  
the way you marshal 'double-or-nothings' all to be surprised again  
like frogs from frosted pond-sides, to be a sad version of 'charming,'  
Solar heated heydays. Yeah all humans want them.  
But wanting was the only way that you were ready. News flash:  
Heydays flocked. Heydays landed like bowls of soup too hot in the hands.  
Now you leave your bandage off and think: *What doesn't kill us?*  
(Though you don't stop there.) It's really a sad version of 'moving'  
how you strive to stay present and vulnerable and exposed  
because, to you, that proves there's something left for losing.

I mean, come on, these days you're hardly moving targets!  
Autumn's inner recidivist graffiti artists ooze at all of your 'No Trespass' signs.  
(Like *that* would keep them out of here.) Fresh out the clink,  
one shakes a spray paint can beside its ear: *Clack-Clunk*.  
*Zoundz to me juz like a rained-out picnic rattling round za trunk*.  
Average folk from every block, you'd think, would damn the vampire-splatter  
on the shrubs now, which, like spray-painted parrots, won't regreen without a pluck.  
Would damn the shrapnel, all October's amber clogging storm drains in November.  
Might hamper damn November from growing in the nidus of the gutters.  
Might stop Midas from fingering down the trees. Instead, we find another snow shovel  
esteemed in the entryway, ready to work like a young dream re-imagining the world it's in.

Seems setting out into December would have you all as wary as a search team  
sent for prior search teams. Which knew karate. But no, your literati chain down giants,  
forget and call them hills. You should know by now this won't end well.  
You hear the pell-mell wind saw one note on the Stradivarius then play her saw.  
You hear the same surgeon saw groans out of cows and still you're only adding layers  
when a blizzard reaches down to wash its hands inside your house.  
Oh, this is an emboldened dwindling? Your heart must be molten, Charming!  
I mean, really? The season's put down, man. Down's beholden to the ice.  
But if you say so; if I'm a codger; if you really trust your randy reasoning—  
*How fair she grows from day to day*— then why not wager this reader's life?  
I'm willing, still, to bet your kiss to wake her won't work twice.

## Ode to It

In *What is it?* what's the problem?  
But in case it matters, I believe in it  
in theory. While not precisely an apple  
wormed through with sorrows,  
it is a changeling in the taxon with  
gestalt morphology. *See: Sparrows  
sublimate from old men eating bread.*

It will be one thing for me to precipitate  
it from applause. A hat of sand dollars  
from the tubed hands caressing ego.  
And another if I give in and give up metaphor.  
Without metaphor it is what it is.  
It's one thing or another.

If it's a rogue wake in the Higgs, it's rote.  
Dark matters, apparently. But on the shoulder  
of our route exit toward destiny, it is what everyday was.  
What everydog has— its day of archaeology in shoeboxes,  
digging through bound stacks of love letters,  
the shale of a sexual career.

We sigh. We say O it's complicated alright.  
It's more moose than emu but less llama than an ostrich is!  
But at certain moments it sure feels  
more concrete than a mist of something or others.  
We find we believe it in the grammars of birds,  
but when we see it we have to wake up words.

## This Is Horse Springs Coulee

I didn't recognize it because it was dead.

If a horse is dead, why won't it say so?  
Spread on the dissection table like an orange-peel map,

we've got twenty generation's worth of cutting in half to do  
before we split up all these metaphors and get down to the Coulee.

No need to remind me now's no time for your average prayer.  
I see that we're going through hell and have to bridle tangents just to keep the story moving.

Down here that's no easy task.  
Some have been as faint as letters moth wings write onto the wind.

And most of it— just useless crap. Not worth the tether.  
For instance, this turtle wearing a helmet.

That bat snoozing face down in his sonar.  
Lookye here though, it's the Cameo my mom ate three weeks before she birthed me.

The apple of her eye...A stretch? Well I call it digging deep, Mr. Volcano.  
And deep down your dead metaphors spark like foreign language on a postcard.

Like deep down your lost face never thought it had two eyes.  
Not since the eruption. And do you honestly believe

we'll plough through the body of this igneous province and turn up only words?  
Especially when the first things we unearthed were mole tunnels.

Since become a network of underground streams.  
Which you're trying to tell me is just allegory for the first time

blood cells bored arteries in the raw and unhewn porphyry of the human hand holding this book.  
Like prisoners making a great escape from the concentration of the heart.

Which you say is just a word, but I say, Volcano,  
is you brimming over with the first soils of Horse Springs Coulee.

O hypermediated Hot Damn! (Metacognitively speaking)  
Argument had legs and got away from us.

*"Keep limbs outside the chairlift at all times."*  
Be stuck here forever if we're not careful jackhammering these etiological myths.

Which is hard because they're often made of starlight.  
Like the gilt breastplate bestowed upon the Western Meadowlark

when she belly-flopped into the sun and splashed the world with yellowbells.  
Jiminy Christmas! Don't cross those streams.

And still we're digging, thinking, Hell would be if this meant nothing.  
Kicking in images for the sake of themselves.

Backyard cat burials. Clouds like spilled bleach on a blue tablecloth.  
A love poem's wild simile flown out on a limb to sing a mating call.

Laid.Egg dammed in from all directions.  
Things surrounded by their name.For real mixed metaphor,

blend 1-cup hologram and a field folded with these dry ingredients:  
Painted house. Worded world.

A cake-slice from the layered birdsong blanketing the neighborhood.  
Store it all in a town on the verge of vanishing.

Wait a vacant decade then stir volcano with an icicle. To make the coulis, pun hard,  
crack a few names into a deadpan. Boil down the wildwood floor.

This casserole is best served cold, at wakes,  
alongside potted horse-meat and the sea's excellent source of sodium.

For variation try adding a pinch of  
*"Now That's Some Tone! — Signature Transcripts of Sobbing."*

We'll pause now to let our sponsors perform a human sacrifice.

## Straw Man

'I am Cain. I know who I am.'

'Well then, have you turned out your bundle as we asked?'

'Here, take the two spills of sun when morning  
whelmed the garden walls.'

'I'll stitch X's for its eyes.'

'Take this benison of two boys afield in the light looms  
of wheat and fleece and lemon groves.'

'For that we'll stuff the pants with straw.'

'And take the echo of my song.'

'As you did,  
we'll use it to depth-sound every promise of forever.'

'Here's a chuckle in a calabash.'

'I hear it rattling around like gravel.'

'Call it the mind, the soul, the wind with a rock in its hand.'

'And what about this crow in flight over the whole young scene?'

'That's envy. Make feet from its crumpled wings.'

'I think I'll put a feather in its hat.'

'And remember as you throw each stitch—  
the more like a man it is, the more it frightens birds.'

## Guardrails

*“The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.” –Mark Twain*

It isn't overly offensive the way this poet rushes them into evening.  
Hard not to like the way he hotwires a world with grammar  
and revs up the stars' old industry of looking down.  
How, out in the meadow, his characters hear  
the last daffodils calling yellow through their blow horns,  
the twigs bending back to their potential for straightness,  
the glissandos leading the first bats into the air.  
But why suddenly does he have them look up and wonder  
if each star counterbalances a martini while it leans  
over a guardrail to watch the moon enter the sky  
like a snowball lobbed off the ledge of heaven?  
That's only hyper-real. And later one could argue that perhaps  
the writer's sensibility forces itself on that faux golden line about  
sentences, how their claims are often merely veiled wishes.  
And then to count in minutes until their wish is sick,  
that's just cruel. Letting their bodies tally happiness  
while forcing their minds forward into a snow flurry  
and then calling the flurry a lost and found of wings?  
That's mixed up, even if negative-capability is what he's after.  
Though, it must be said, this resourcefulness is admirable,  
having the family use jarred fireflies for flashlights  
ever since their one-hundred watt heaven came unscrewed.  
That almost foretells one of those enduring endings.  
Especially when the characters seem to want to speak more plainly,  
and it becomes easier to feel sorry for them. After all,  
each page of the valley's written steep with hyperventilating fictions,  
each euphoria ascends second-guessed through his world of thin air.  
Mourning by cathartic proxy? Less weird than one would think.  
You start to get the sense he actually does care for them  
when he has the bee turn back to attack the hurricane,  
when the Little Dipper saves one teaspoon from  
the rest of the black waste he's been calling evening sky.  
And after all the bloodshed there is a sense of reluctance  
when he turns the corner and realizes he has to inflict  
his epistemological suspicions by making love impossible.  
Will that prove too much for even this poem? Tragedy threatens then  
to hatch out from the page and spread its wings in his skies too.  
So while it's not the truest ending, it is refreshing  
when for once he decides to let them be more than just *like*  
a lightning caught forever in his cool web of sky.

## Flashjars

Someone chloroformed the dog.

Lipstick's on the grail brim again.

This safari's through the inverse of depression.

Firefly eats firefly. Bat eats firefly. Bat sleeps like a lit lantern.

This 'Us,' for buffering. This 'You,' othering.

Circling at the edge of the freeze-dried light of every bug zapper, an Icarus.

Desire off-kilter. A heart off-center. The whatever works. Zbbt

Wear camo in the foliage of bad ideas.

Amass the world's technology and call that thing God. *Distant Thunder*.

'Tut-tut, it looks like rain.' Suffering's offering half an umbrella.

Distorting under half-light, the imposition of the will took home the imp of the perverse.

Fear spilling like a zephyr through the atmosphere, dawn shading quietly toward a blue anxiety.

Love, v-necked as it was, dehisced below eye-level.

*Flick my light-switch nipples and turn me on!* says the cyborg.

Meanwhile mainline lithium and try to die 40% less tomorrow.

A hole in the bucket of life and no bung now that we banned single-use accessories.

Better return those roses since, according to your ex-gone-lesbian-again, you're one.

## **EAGLES!**

“Pick up your doubt  
and carry it.  
It’s time to go.”

“So you’re telling me  
they hunt the same wind  
that heaves the forest fire?”

“Yes. Abandon  
those prayers of the earth  
not meant for men  
and go.”

“Something’s coming?”

## The Something's Coming

TURNING and turning in the five gyres  
the phytoplankton cannot see the sun.  
Plastic things fall apart; the ocean fills its hold.  
Mere rising tides loose all the beachwood  
from the earth onto the currents. Somewhere  
a monument of ice with our inscription  
sloughs from an iceberg into an ocean.  
The best chew tofu, while the worst crank up  
their thermostats and turn L.A. into Atlantis.

Caucuses debate. That's sure.  
Surely the Something's Coming is at hand.  
The Something's Coming! Hardly are those words out  
when real-estate agents cold-call with a deal  
in Colorado Springs. On TV, activists would sooner  
seed the waters with their tea than pour caustic soda  
down the drain in the Marianas Trench they fathom  
is clogged with walrus beard. Scientists apply their will  
to evolving gills again. The deep roils (mulls? *boils?*)  
over the time for action. But now we know;  
window-deep after one fuel-injected century,  
our palimpsest's wiped clean by this rise and fall  
which gathers the Pacific Trash Vortex and all  
the beachwood it knew to leave at arm's reach,  
to build for us another great Ark to board.

## Rules for the Use of Boats

'Could say all poems end then send us packing,  
but that would be the wrong thing to say.  
And who's to say we two couldn't, just this once,  
wish ourselves elsewhere, slow-blowing raspberries  
in some meadow of soft stomach, our cheeks  
rounder than a westron wind?'

'But leave a note right?'

'No need! Sold clear out of imagination,  
we wake up one day and duck out early,  
leaving a little broadleaf on the doorstep  
like a flyer dropped in Autumn reading:  
*Closed for Renovations—*'

*This always happens!*

'—That typically  
slows him down a while. He'll still give chase,  
of course, but just a wee head start should  
get us to that cliff he won't go near.'

'With the overhanging tree and rope swing?'

'Yes. And there we quietly, metaphorically, simply  
wave goodbye and dive off into hidden sailboat rigging.'

'A sailboat? Sounds a little too fortuitous  
don't you think?'

'No, not just yet.  
This paper boat's a refit prison hulk.  
See now? One previously fated to spend  
some lesser version of forever tacking  
up the currents in West-Running Brook.  
Which, it's true, isn't such a bad scene.  
June-hued. The sky a huge blue robin's egg  
cracking only briefly over contrails.  
Every cry of *Eagles!*— eagles-schmeagle'd.  
You imagine the conversations. And the uproar  
at first when it isn't clear it's good  
our fall has fouled the sails, forced all ashore  
to join the dish and spoon in hiding. But!  
It's there, in a low voice by firelight, those two  
first tell their story of a beach in Thailand.  
A place where the white caps tilt a touch of salt

at closure, surfing back and forth erasing line breaks,  
letting the ocean's trusty meter counter  
the tendency of dialog to disappear.'

'Back there again? But wasn't our wish—  
our wish was to be human, even if that means we die.'

'How like a wish to come at you backwards then!  
If what you say is true, if such a never-setting moon  
does loom behind them on the horizon, tell me,  
what right things can they really say to themselves?  
Damn mirror just reflects their distances back at them.  
Might as well avoid all this ancestral drawl  
of 'unclaimed somedays,' forget the future,  
and launch our boat in one of memory's shipping lanes.  
Out of a harbor fog that cancels school  
we'll sail a broad reach back through  
blooming fields of snap peas, and mountain picnics,  
and garden weddings, past that dockside diner  
with the brisket that could finish sentences.'

'I'd say the only thing worse than a wisher's a dreamer.  
But sure, you think we can do the impossible,  
that's great. We'll run away. Just like kids  
afraid to take a test in school. Nevermind  
what happens when twice more an abandoned name  
flies through the uprights of our empty desks.  
That's real great for those still there.  
And the late arriving students too.  
Normally sent back to the world,  
you know, I bet they get taken in then  
just to fill the classroom.'

'I'm not sure I appreciate your tone.'

'But don't you see, it's WE who have to  
follow through and do the things that  
make that wish come true. It's a decision.'

'But what's the use? Nothing we do or say seems right.  
And *he's* been no comfort. And *they* all think  
something more comes after this. Do we?  
If we're wrong, you want to know what's really  
left for us? Just— Just this. Obituaries. Picture day.'

'Well, I overheard that his brother's said



## This Is Horse Springs Coulee

Put my head out in the pasture.

It feels leaky, dribbling memes while it rolls the valley walls trying to cite culture with clichés.  
*"I swear. I can sell lemonade back to life to pay the credit cards."*

The head rolls uphill. Passes the berm where sincerity once pissed into the driven snow of words.  
Passes the ridge where we licked jelly off a knife to the great danger of our tongues.

Passes the flume. The wildwood. The woolen mills. All for bad news;  
The world, unimpressed and passing by like ticker tape, responds, unhelpfully, with

geological jargon.  
Laccolith. Pluton. Place of her first permission. Hogback. Talus.

Relic shinbone of a saint that disappeared to get somewhere.  
And feldspar. Twinned crystal. Half-living uranium. Orogens.

Ancient silence in a limestone cave like a condemned gymnasium.  
The head stops. Looks around. Did we outlast distraction?

At long last, deep in this Procrustean dark,  
death appears to at least turn all the specious stuff to gold.

Turns out no rational beings like life in the grave for the sake of life.  
*"Sirs, Ma'ams, Me Ug. Deepscare. No good talk."*

What do you know, Ug!?                   *"Thing bouquet."*  
And what then, Ug!?                   *"Dirt on."*

Ok. But please be sure not to let desperation throw even one spade beyond the need for our  
actions to brim beautifully. *"That just."* Life in a poem for the sake of life...

Turning phrase  
over phrase

over phrase,  
and still the world is changing into *this*.

I guess it's not a huge surprise to learn a conveyor belt of gravel  
rolls beneath the stylus of our gramophone.

Always when we heard the groans grind their nighthawk loam  
we drew grasses on the map instead. We'd sift loess and picture yellowbells.

Knee-deep in the spring, we'd lift and toss each deadpan in the air like startled meadowlarks,  
then call them names. Yellow leaked across the skies like themes.

Now, after the burial, our head rolls the hill-roads of Horse Springs Coulee.  
We pass the boy tracing his name in puddles with a twig.

Feels like crawling out from under a saddle cloth. We're on two feet again.  
At the first concrete road we find, we tuck our shirts in.

Now here's the good news. This time  
the world dumps out its barrowful of fireflies before it wheels the sun away.

The map fades, its boot of valley laced with laylines,  
all the names carved and hearted, each blaze on a tree.

It seems there's more air in the air than before. Here one inspiration of the lungs  
consumes the same amount of oxygen as writing out our names with sparklers in the sky.

And slowly all the ways we found along the way, including  
the too-soon doglegged path of the wish, the circular-drive of envelopes containing money,

the bras opened like taco trucks inside the void,  
all the ways we found along the way dusk down to uni-texture.

Say what you will of memory's erasures, of the collapse we make abstractions with.  
Later we'll be glad that where there was gold, we wrote gold. Even called it myth.

But for now,  
in real blankets,

these seines of sleep,  
we can finally disappear to get to where we're going.

Up. Up into the world's wet paint.

## Remainder of the Jar

Now the good news. All down the lane the puddles  
have dried out and in them we find footsteps.  
The sky's come down like a bubble wand  
with us at the center. The sky's an eye-rinse.

There must once have been a toll kiss to enter  
this two-seater outhouse. Why else this  
red spider in a mason jar? The loose cedar shingling  
filling in our bubble of abandoned homestead?

Splintered, a son once rolled his eyes away from father,  
'The roof has to be heavy. Holds up weather.'  
Windy like a throat, about the valley it's an old story  
to worry. About snow. About bears. About

these two cloud banks haunting opposite walls  
the way young rubes in love eye across a dance hall.  
And when the steelhead swimming the horizon stain red  
we find ourselves again at the old woodpile on a farm.

For as long as forever is willing to wait,  
an old log holds out upright on a splitting stump.  
Each melt resets his posture to that of a statue in a storm.  
I swing an old axe and miss and divide by zero.

It is then the old world blows through a zero on a stick and fills infinity.  
Will it be that nothing was too good for us? Here comes transposition.  
Here goes another night starting on the car's ignition. But as the sun winks out  
the cloud banks come together like a pillow fight in a dark room.