

Amphitheatre

Wearing today like a moth let out of a room.

Nothing to do but follow the night from one side

of the lake to the other. Like tremulous joy. Deciding
not to arm yourself in the face of annihilation.

Like Cheever's wild swim over the suburbs. Like liberation.
Reversing a word in your mind: *esuba*,

to survive. Wearing today like Lagertha, seeing
the arc of her life: a roan horse that stands for memory.

Your Viking hair. Like Hippocrates on the island of
Kos: the warm healing winds. A hand unclenching.

A veined pebble. Like the 'humming moment'.

Remember when we would braid each other's hair

before battle? Like pulling thin china to your lips.

A curlicue of steam. Like a rat within: sometimes

it eats and takes from you but drives you like fuel;
hot and toxic and wanting to be used.

Like real danger in the air. All you are gratefully
allowed to know for now. An asp darting from a coiled

basket. *How can we be sure of anything again with our
own eyes? How can we be everywhere at once?* Like a decision

for another day. A poem you can no longer read.
Like Crow peering into his own brain. Like exhaustion.

The first journey to the city after your breakdown:
the way people described the first meal in a restaurant

after lockdown. Wearing today like a skyscraper
collapsing, coming to meet us in an inevitable way.

The bed, an amphitheatre where you watch television,
where you dream. Like leading up to something.

An extinction level event. Like taking
painkillers to write. Delicious quiet. An extreme

angle. A prism. Waiting to be born.
I knew some things in a different way ten minutes ago.

Like a sound the birds recognise and keep quiet.
The death I was carrying in my heart. As if somewhere,

someone is not having a desolate moment.

Firefly

Wearing today like keeping company with fire.
A snake takes the night into its body, dislocating

its jaw. A sheet in the forest canopy collects insects.
I write – it's how I judge myself and feel better. If I stopped,

what would I do? Wearing today like a child pulled
in a carriage by a pig, rushing along a dark midnight

road with the moon above, shrieking with joy, and
the pig so obviously happy. Like Larkin using the

moon to say things about youth and aging. *To know
this comfort is but a station.* A man chasing that moment

he cannot stop chasing; that crack of bone where
object meets human; like having your lights punched

out. All the world's praise with words like *peerless* and
delighted and *thrilling*, pushing you further and further

away from yourself, banging the tin of disappointment
and worthlessness, bringing up the spectre of future

homelessness, poverty and sickness and all that befalls.
Wearing today like doing what is manageable.

Waiting for something to tug at your coat. A lake
of silence. Filling your gaze with the stable horizon.

The evidence of poetry. The world in each breath.
The sheet collects, hoping to find something new:

a firefly, as yet unseen. A surge of hands. A fan wafted
over memory. Merciless. It burns.



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