

ONE AFTER ANOTHER ALL THESE IDEAS

of what the end of the world looks like:
are we there yet are we there yet the ash
I wash from my sheets tonight
the blanket too the pillows everything
which is nothing really just fires the yellow sky
and red sun a journalist's dream it was this bad
and we stayed alive it was the first day
of fourth grade and she said unlimited books
and he wore his new light-up shoes
which in the haze were especially
and seeing all the moms again I had forgotten which
had family in Texas in Puerto Rico this week
all is taken from some of them the wall of water the rooftops
the parents in Guam the sky full of light how many of us
disappearing through this colander shook out
into wherever the state fair feeling of our new life
I mean we are still alive and last year my girl won a silver medal
in mutton busting yes really and hell yes this year she will ride again
but the whirl of it as the only way the whirl of us
against the spinning wall do you know the one I mean
Round-Up Souls for Christ they call it at the cabbage
& tater festival in Hastings but more commonly
it is just the one where you can hold hands and then are frozen within yourself

EASY STREET

In the basement of the hospital
is a town called Easy Street. No one lives there.
A town of latches, doorknobs, curbs
where you learn to do the stupid things you used to be able to do.
Up the stairs you go and pay your fare.
The bus driver is a faded cardboard cutout,
the skyline sweetly outdated. No one is in a hurry.
Midnight and it's a real ghost town, empty wine glasses
forgotten in the fake restaurant,
a few more beside the fake bed.
The Buick Skylark
parked out back has no engine.
All I can do is lock, unlock. Behind me
the midwife sounds out ideas
woven into the carpet. How high
the reach, how thin the rail. Easier
to get to my body through another's, to skirt
the curb. Tonight
or tomorrow I will become two people.
A path in the carpet to where furniture was.

TOO

Another one, we said, just one more
once more into the
and when it went beyond, I in my slippers
and he in his traffic, too much
or too little, pull of the mind
on waking too, too late, too fast down the hill,
but also then it was too few,
too sweet, too early to know, or too soon,
although by then none of us remembered
how it felt to be alone, I mean we wanted that too
sometimes, but too when we were alone
it was too quiet too real as the oldest would say
too often, too real meaning keep going
but without me.

TOTALITY

everyone was asking what filter would be best
during those seconds when together we clicked over into darkness
my daughter's ten forward rolls across the chill dark grass
the darkness so well-organized I wanted to email someone

well you do not need to know how perfect it was
how many hours we had driven the minivan knee-deep
because for all our fun there was always another much larger
wheel turning alongside our life the real
the coal trains moving only at night the prison in the Ukraine how it was in the news
then replaced by other news

I don't really want there to be more of us I am not looking to find
anyone although my girl spinning across that grass crooked into our neighbors
how to live in this not just wait for it to be over one of them
was always running across the field what else can you do
in the silence were we too contained in our joy we held it between us
we drove it home where was I in this I was in the extra looking all around

THE REMODEL

I built a house that could not hold us.
Uterine kitchen, porthole bookshelf, the beds
hung with rope. Deep green curtains
I'd copied from the movie about the arsonist.
The children with their pocket knives
allowed to roam. Living room so vast
I barely recognized you beneath the sconces.
Who could keep this up? When you taped plastic sheeting
over the windows, time stopped. I told the painters
no earth tones. Slow Green was a no. Establish Mint
too white. Sometimes a cloud would knock,
a cloud would sing to me. That little bit
of time unhooked. The grounds.
Why would I leave when the trees out back
hadn't yet lifted concrete into tongues, into petals.
Not yet the smell of ice thawing so far from the sea.
The world's seed bank thawing in the Antarctic distance,
row by row, packet by packet. Hurry kills love,
you said, and so and so and
so this metal grate keeps the monkeys out.

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