

Matt Poindexter

Rodanthe

The wallop storms arrive, often in fall, and realign the islands off the coast. An inlet opens up to leave a ghost where once a sherbet-colored house stood tall. Still, by the millions, snowbird cash pours in. The latest hurricane peels back the roof and dumps it in the sound. “Destruction proof,” retirees were told, not knowing then of something more, annihilation. So Atlantis, Doggerland, and so the sand where we once stacked our castles. Water stole those forts. We built again. We didn’t know—pretended if we did. Each tide, the land erodes, goes grain by grain. Isle into shoal.

Thank You Note

How can I even begin? In laziness,
I left a million lizard tails
to wriggle in the maws of dogs.
In negligence, I trod across the minefield
some other fuckup didn't wire right.
Each setback, a box of fruit arrived
with spotless apples wrapped in tissue
and cradled in their nest of bedding;
I let them rot. I wrote no thank you notes.
This is not boast, but regret. I wish
I wasted less. The blessing I am most
grateful for is the inattentiveness
of those who could have ruined me.
Some of the dogs needed only
to shut their jaws, but lost the train
of thought. I didn't die,
I didn't die, I carried on like that
for so long, I received a medal for longevity.
Now, the peach pit tucked in my brain
wants to flood my bones with joy
but only sputters guilt.
When I tell you *thank you*, I don't mean
for acknowledging long-awaited success,
but for the way your cupped hands
ladled oblivious kindness like cool water,
failure after failure after failure.

Aubade

The neighbor's dog laments it lost
the hare inside the dream.
An Amtrak mourns the end of night.
The train heard bleeding distant darkness
carries secret meaning, but sunlight
bleaches metaphor; our train is just a train.
Boys in Chevys missing mufflers join the chorus
as they rumble to their dead-end jobs.
Driveway to driveway, the garbage truck whines
in high hydraulics, blue bins respond
and clap their emptiness aloud.
I also wish some shard of night remained.
Our world rises in ruckus, contrapuntal,
from all angles. But you, you sleep the way
I can't. I wake not from the noise,
but before it. I precede the sun. There, I lay
on my side, my high ear catching
only your breath, which ebbs easy.
My other ear, flat against my wrist,
gathers a distant chug of blood,
the oxygen it accepts in the chest,
the unlit tunnels that it runs.
How dare the brightness cue
the small complaints of dogs and trains.
How dare they drown out
the way my heartbeat and your exhales
meld in the dim predawn.

“Drinking of the Wine”

The field recordings caught their voices, noise
of nets and waves, menhaden flopping in
the foam. We hear these disembodied men
because they hauled in seine and sang their joys:
the eucharist, their sacred, holy wine.
Believe their boat a chancel, then. Believe
the sea burgundy, dark enough to leave
a mark on a man. Imagine what the brine
might mean to chantey singers born to fish,
whose fathers fished, whose fathers' fathers too.
Imagine knowing what it is to thirst
amid their wet infinity. They wish
a thousand years of wine. The thwart their pew,
they dip into that rougher chalice first.