

## THE SABBATH

We weren't speaking. It was snowing, temps dipping  
 into the teens. You and I were playing Frisbee  
 because we'd fought all day, and it's a tonic  
 to get outside and throw the sharp disk at one another  
 with cold dumb hands. Then the animals appeared.  
 Horses—male, I think—a pair of grayish steeds climbed  
 the man-cleared path to the softball field  
 in Prospect Park, where we stood at a distance.  
 “Wow:” you said, “horses,” but I missed them at first.  
 I was chasing down the disk that overshot, banked  
 above and hissed in the sky, a flattened apple.  
 I had had it. “Baby,” I almost said, “I'm *trying*  
 to make a catch here.” But I was stopped instead,  
 lofted like the Frisbee. It was the word *horses*  
 in Brooklyn air. It was their bodies in Brooklyn in 2007.  
 Though what is the good of horses in Brooklyn in 2007?  
 As the first came he bowed his head with one step  
 and hoisted with the next, nodding like a drunk to nobody  
 he knows; so slowly that, within the machinations  
 of a single nod, I revised this scene a dozen times  
 and made a fine behind-the-back Frisbee snatch  
 to boot. And yes, I remembered the horses of Achilles,  
 the chariot of Israel, and Emily's toward Eternity . . .  
 Sometime I'd like to discuss the horses at length.  
 Meanwhile the second horse did whatever I say  
 the first horse did, which is walk, and smoke breath,  
 glimmer and gloom. They both shouldered through  
 the intermittent aeons of twilight as mitigated

by black tree shafts. There were riders, too—  
there must have been. They wore fancy sweaters—  
red, or was it blue? I even thought to go to them,  
gently, and stare into their eyes (the horses, I mean)  
to see the candles on the horse-shaped altar inside—  
horses are, perhaps, more lovely than a Frisbee  
—but that's not what happened, Honey. This  
is our life: we fought until dark, we mastered  
our timing, you made that magnificent cartwheel toss.

GLASS WORK SONG

Well, he was no theologian,  
but when we were children  
my best friend's father would speak of the lord,  
though only when given a question,  
so we asked him often.

Otherwise  
his cantos were carried by a foreman's voice  
so unlike our own—volume high  
to overcall the furnace howl, tone low  
to part and cross the shriek  
of those conveyors he left at five,  
and the shattered eardrum he didn't.

But ask of Golgotha,  
ask of the Good Samaritan,  
and the great voice slowed, faltered,  
bent, and broke finally, grunting to carry  
the words of the lord. *Grace, Angel,*  
*Nazareth, Rome*—disparate notes  
of a fractured tune

gathered  
in dinnertime steam. Rising  
over beans, beets, venison chuck,  
a melody hummable by none of us  
was nonetheless hummed by all.

And so it was for my friend  
in his twenty-second year.

He set out quiet from the Windy City  
six months early, out of cash,  
out from the school of his choice  
to the job he'd sworn he'd never do.  
This song: his father's job. This song:  
the glass plant.

And so it was  
that Wednesday, hump day,  
his third day of work.  
He began to sing nonetheless.  
Over coffee mugs and cigarettes  
on picnic tables, among men mid-  
break in a brick wall room,  
he raised his voice.

It sounded like this:  
*Couldn't we go faster if we lifted alone?*  
*Isn't this tri-pane impossible to shatter?*  
—not good beginnings.

Whoever you are, you aren't surprised  
how quickly, sharply, the men, in response,  
said nothing at all.

How glancingly  
they spoke about the sheets and sheets  
they'd stacked six days a week  
for years—always *two men* to a pane.  
This song is not about materials.  
This song is how to pick and swing  
an eight-foot length without decapitating  
Bruce or Joe. Among them, this song  
is not knowing glass. Lifting it? Yes.  
Carrying? Balancing?  
Yes.

But those ponderous rectangle  
hushes of air, those reflective spans  
they won't lift alone? Daily they sing  
one another this omittance. Each will have

the next

    enjoy this *Grace, Angel,*  
*Nazareth* . . . They are in attendance  
to the music—

        scales heard, day in,  
day out, in common; a lifetime  
of tickets to La Scala, but knowing  
there's no need to leave Kenosha.  
To stack these panes for many years  
and say very little of glass:

this is fellowship among them  
becoming fellowship  
among us, a chorus that aspires  
to a certain quiet; a quiet becoming  
the closest we can get.

## THE PROPHETS

A river. And if not the river nearby, then a dream  
of a river. Nothing happens that doesn't happen  
along a river, however humble the water may be.

Take Rowan Creek, the trickle struggling to lug  
its mirroring across Poynette, wherein, suspended,  
so gentle and shallow, I learned to walk, bobbing

at my father's knees. Later, whenever we tried  
to meander on our inner tubes, we'd get lodged  
on the bottom. Seth, remember, no matter how we'd

kick and shove off, we'd just get lodged again?  
At most an afternoon would carry us a hundred feet  
toward the willows. We'd piss ourselves on purpose

just to feel the spirits of our warmth haloing out.  
And once, two bald men on the footbridge, bowing  
in the sky, stared down at us without a word.