



Things I Forgot to Put on My Reminder List

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RICHARD JACKSON

Things I Forgot to Put on My Reminder List

Turn off the coffee. Feed the cat. Lock the door.
Don't let the morning drift away like a barge.
Don't let sorrow drain the stars from the pond.
Don't try to colonize a lost past. Words like icebergs
breaking loose from the pack. The grammar of loss.
The heart being cannibalized. The mangrove of despair.
What else have I forgotten to pack? Everything
flares up in this fire like a pine cone dipped in wax.
The leg of the walking stick goes up like a match.
The light grabs everything like a hungry star.
How do we ever know what is important enough
to remember? History's promises knifing us in the back.
The snipers who have started to reload.
If only we could see them in those hills.
Why is it raining inside all the clocks?
The importance of remembering: of the nearly five
thousand heartbeats per hour, only one has to forget.
The shifting arguments of artillery positions.
The firelight falling, the embers forgetting the flame.
Those men in the Bosnian hills forced to bite off
each others testicles. The souls carried there
in satchel charges. Hate dripping off the table
into the next century. What will be left for any of us?
Fix the screen, wash the car. Mow the lawn. To watch
the snail making its way up the side of a house
all night, leaving a history only we can understand.
Or the sky that lies shattered at your feet. To
peek through the keyhole of fate. To see how
the night still lingers in your eyes. The way my soul
levitates around you. The smell of overripe
peaches on the counter. How you open your eyes to me
in the morning. Maybe I should just crumple this list
into the fire. Maybe our hopes can no longer fly
like those two wild turkeys we saw yesterday.
Apples, coffee, juice. Is there any part of you
my mouth has not touched? My old self hanging
like a moth-eaten coat in a closet. Call the florist.
Mail the letters. Pick up the tickets. Check the maps.

Richard Jackson 89

Don't worry that the earth's inner core spins faster
and laps us every 400 years. We are still here.
In spite of. In what way. In the meantime.
The wasps chasing us, getting caught in your hair.
The assassin's nightscope needing adjustments.
Time: the black ants eating the tree from the inside
out, always anticipating, always dreading
the moment they see light. Where would we live?
Don't worry, the heart always floats to the surface.
The essence of string theory in physics being
that we are all tied together by invisible emotions.
These words at your door like a nervous delivery
boy. Everything wants to take flight. The sparks
of this fire disappearing into the dark. The names
of the victims always written out of the treaty.
Where can we go with our squeaky fan belt,
our retread tires, our out-of-date maps?
Inside you, all roads unravel. Even before I touch you:
how you start to imitate the way the ground fog
wavers across the grass. Some nights the dew
seems to soak the stars. Your laugh settling
in the corners. Your words weeding the flowers.
The old doubts finally washing up on shore.
Paint the house. Trim the bushes. Patch the roof.
Get rid of the garbage. Return the calls. Turn off the lights.
Bandage the heart. Bandage the hour. Hold you
against the sky, against the future.
Each of us shadowboxing with eternity.
To let your voice halt the moon in its tracks.
To let its light stroke the wings of your soul.

— *For Terri*

