

Gardens Of Pompeii

I Do Not Even Know Why We Are This Way

I will tell you

The truth, which should be

Easier than it is. Tonight

I am by the ocean, on a cliff of history, at a place that is soon

To disappear—in both

Ways the geological

Sense. Rodanthe is nothing

In all this water. But by the time

Everything crumbles,

Now assured, I will

Not exist. I am

Terrified by two horrors I

Will never know. But remain

Consumed by them. I

Do not know even

Why this is a poem.

Burritos from the taqueria on B Street
Warmed Camellia's lap in the passenger

Seat under sunset with impossibly radiant guitar

Ring in our air. Out the corner
Of my eye at the kitchen table later
I saw Joe Manchin ending the world on my tablet. The monstrous
Walk among us on their yachts. I dream of murdering
Him cold, after limbing his torso
Like a tree. Why should anyone judge

Me? The future will want these fantasies

For themselves. I did not tell the girls, instead

Said "I need to write." Soon we'll finish
The new "Chip 'n Dale"—we all fell
Asleep watching on my parents' couch after
The long last leg of our drive

Back to Chicago from the far coast, from the islands

That are drowning. Now returned
Out West in the drought, we have animated

Dead Reckoning, Summer 2022

Chipmunks whose plots are yet

All the way played. The air is concise & cool
In the late light of tonight. Last night July's buck moon

Was pink & flat against

The limitless lightening sky. Two of us pointed

To it at the same time.

One of the only friends
I have left sent
A video of a man who wanted to believe this century
& its great melting are still
Untold. For a moment, I
Accidentally pretended, then

When We Still Called It A Drought

Recoiled. The only choice
Left is truth or hope, and our doomed live
On the unreachable coast. How foreign has become
The thought of them? My love & our girls & I
Watched meteors chase night above
The valley in Yosemite last
Weekend, played in its cold river that day.

Sometimes I think about the butterfly
Ballots in Palm Beach
County, Florida, that disaster
Of design, the flaw in some maker's
Thought that shivved

Unreturning Our species. If you don't know what
I mean, I can't
Tell you here, but Al tried
To warn us anyway. So maybe
That future was never
To be heard. Could it have been

That easy? A few names listed
In a column, and glaciers
Entrench themselves into the new

History. Sometimes I'd carry
Emily—my old black Maine Coon—with all four paws
In my palm. She was
The cat from the years
The girls barely remember. They loved
When I'd hold her with one
Hand, brush my teeth with
The other while the water ran—but Emily is
Gone now & their minds moved
On & I am the only
One who can picture it.

They carved the DNA

Out of the Greenland promontory. It windowed

An ancient comic abundance in vast
Proliferation at the top of the world. A taunt

To remind us the beginning
Of history was really the start
Of the story's end. This part

Is the quickening: false
Genius feasting on
The birds of its ego & gawking
At its piles, godful
Nihilists panting
With their guns, masses
Entranced by the morphing lights. No place
That knew so much had ever been
So dumb.

Telescoping, Winter 2022

Except for the parts

That get eaten, all things in

All stores are future garbage, even the shelves &
Their attachments. The earth will keep everything
But us, and in time

Crush it all into rock or oblivion or
Melt it at some non-standard
Rate in a compendium
Of ways. We approach

The era of disposal—its rows

Tilled, its intonement

Strides the aisles. Even that traffic

Light will succumb—the one that doesn't know it hangs

Above the ghosts of autumn

Acorns gathered to dry then haunt

The granary woven

From stems. We are

The parts that get eaten.

Boxes Of Talismans

Downwind From The Pyroclastic Flow

The ocean will fail
Us, but not itself. It
Once swaddled giant
Hundred-foot ichthyosaurs in its waters, the grandest
Of any entity
That fought for its life. Now the dolphins
Think beneath the blue, but maybe soon
They'll go too. And we will drown in it, watch
The die-offs, starve. The ocean will
Not care, just start again under
Different air. It's all
In the waves. We're all in
The waves. We were in the waves, diving
Under the crests, feeling
Its cold salt on our skin, in contact with
The beginning of the molecules
Spanning every inch of it, we
Are something in all this water.

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(Winter 2022)