

Anniversaries of Autumn

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So much for the days I can't remember . . .
or rather, should recall when their numbers
come up as they do, because weeks in advance

I see them pending on the calendar.
A commemoration of exactitude,
the dates clumped together like lit windows

in a building across the avenue .
Windows I hardly notice until in one of them
I recognize a face and start to panic.

I, who strive to be inhabited by words,
unable to put together the idea
with the thing itself. A sheaf spilled open,

pigeons pecking for crumbs on the sidewalk,
a whole flock poised above on a wire
as though ready to descend, a deafening flutter

cascading down. An unctuous residue
on the pavement. It isn't difficult
to find this place on the map of your going.

Let's say it's by a river, let's say I am
supposed to meet you at a particular time,
though I can't, because I can't remember

what it was I had agreed to. Only
that there is this date circled, not in red—
the black numeral underlined in pencil.

Underneath a sketch of sunbeams slanting
through clouds. What am I missing?
What anniversary or augured occasion?

What saint is sitting at a bright table,

awaiting the rapture of arrival?
The water murmuring, lapping against

the pier, just audible beneath the gaps
in conversation. This absence not regarded
as forgivable. \No matter how inadvertently

one's attention is drawn elsewhere in the flash
and dazzle of the day. You are drinking coffee
or something else I only can imagine.

You might have said something to the waiter
before you took out your money and stood up.
What else could happen as he scrapes the tablecloth?

My voice on the cell phone intermittent
in the static, my pledge of apology
subject to atmospheric conditions.

The words themselves spaced, so that anything could pass
between a sentence and its meaning. The scroll
of weather, a severe or abject mood.

Love can fade without prompting. A baby
we're told bonds to its parents' faces. Thus, we gaze
at each other, fixing the other's gaze.

Possessing the face we want. The wind sweeping up
the seeds of desire as the leaves fall.
Until there is nothing left floating

in the folds of air above the traffic.
Until we can hardly remember what we were
and when we stopped wanting what we wanted.

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