

The Beginning of Summer

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A brightness in the skies even after dark.
A remnant sun splotch. Backlit turquoise
deepening to indigo, then black.
Lavender afterglow of clouds over Mission Peak.
The wind's delicate sharpness on my neck,
as if dusk were a saturation of lyricism.
Intolerable beauty, heartbreaking by definition,
and we are relieved by its passing.
I am appalled by the sensation of being
governed by the body. Swallowing, yawning, having to pee.

After the 235 steps to the bottom of the cavern,
our guide turned off the lights. Total darkness.
"Put your hand in front of your face,
you *think* it's your hand you see."
I had a feeling almost giddy. The mind sees what it wants.
It's why lovers close their eyes when kissing.
I could not see a single thing,
words from my eyes did start. Difficult
for that to continue. Small interruptions—a child's anger,
breakfast dishes, getting toilet paper.

The expected and incalculable distractions—
Car pools, dental appointments, the boredom of children.
How easy to give in. To do nothing
and let the hero become the absence
of narration. It's easy the second week
of summer, heat washing the wide streets,
air yellowing over the valley, altocumulus
scattered and sullen, and, of all things, rain
like a crystalline dust spattering the concrete,
leaving a smoky, acrid scent of evaporation.

The child won't get dressed because the clothing
isn't satisfactory. He wants to wear the stretchy
black bike shorts with pink fluorescent stripes

and black tank top he's worn the last three days
on the camping trip . But they're in the wash.
So, naked, he wanders around the house
wailfully because what I have laid out for him—
the seersucker shorts and light blue T-shirt
I thought he'd be cool in— isn't *cool*. What in nature
can be more hurt than him? Just give in.

What if the least daylight could harm him?
His blood photosensitive, so that to live
he had to be kept where it's dark
like the two girls whose strange affliction
was a story I remember from the news
on television . Who only at night could leave
their house banked with lead curtains,
rising to eat breakfast in the dusk,
then going out to play, the moon their sun,
their birds the owls that by day
sleep hidden in the sultry trees.

Give in. For a brief second in the cave,
I thought I glimpsed how we make the world up
with words. How we lie to perfect memory.
After it rained, gnats swarmed through the ruins of light,
the evening turned lustrous . Vireos flitting about
the chamise and bear brush, a few stars in the east.
A small wind stirring the oatgrass, rustling
the digger pines up the slope and the sycamores below
along the creek where two boys, balancing from rock to rock,
crossing the shadows, were ignored in the twilight's slow perishing.

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