

[*MJTM* 20 (2018–2019) 81–83]

ON BEING REMINDED

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“Which of you by taking thought can add  
one cubit unto his stature?”  
—Jesus in Matt 6:27

Your willow, for instance, doesn't give  
two hoots that you've named him *Weeping*.  
This spring he fires off green fireworks.

Then yesterday, as you sped down a back  
road, a goose waddled across. You stopped  
because she was plainly lord of the meadows.

And this: last night, on your knees watering  
your fledgling daisy in this drought, you felt  
so close to her, so virtuous, so in charge,

you were astonished to hear a green rumble rising  
from deep within earth's chest: *dandelions, clover*,  
calling out the names of weeds as if they were

holy: *kudzu, plantain*. The chorus swelling: *weeds  
of the world unite. In God's eyes  
we are also lovely*. You understand

the daisy you wanted and weeded, this  
chosen, singular daisy you have loved—in solidarity  
with her sisters—may not bloom this summer.

## THE BARGAIN

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We were both writers. You, the better,  
 so I wondered why you kept my book  
 beside you that fall. Each time I visited,  
 you'd moved the rubber band forward.  
 I thought you might finish before you died.

As the cancer ate through your chest,  
 you read faster, played Joplin louder,  
 polished your nails to rosy shells, flung on  
 a flamboyant orange poncho, donned  
 rhine-stone sandals.

In my book

I had written questions even sisters can't ask  
 each other. *Is it better to know the date  
 of your own death? Does it hurt to die?  
 If God is with us, where does he hide?*

If you ever got to the questions, I planned  
 to bargain with you: *come back to tell  
 me answers*. But you knew (or pretended?) chemo  
 would cure you. I thought we understood  
 each other. Our deal: that you'd come back  
 in some guise to tell me.

Into the river you loved

we spread your ashes and you swam into another kind  
 of silence. Now I've come to the place I saw you last,  
 where a gloss of winter moon skids  
 over darkening water. Can you feel  
 the sleet? Sharper than a shower of high notes  
 from your piano. You, who could slip in and  
 out of language, slipped out of your body  
 as if it were a sandal, leaving me behind,  
 knowing nothing.

## AGAIN

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“The Recovered Thing is not quite the same as the Thing-never-  
lost. It is often more precious.”

—J. R. R. Tolkien

After the orchestra finishes, our applause  
pleads *Do it, do it again*. And this time,  
by God, they do. They swarm the stage,  
their faces eager as morning stars, suits  
newly cleaned. We shuck off our coats,  
sit down, uncloset our dog-eared programs.  
This time, I hope, I can finally map the Brahms.

But then as the tall guy with a bow-  
tie turns his double bass on its spindle,  
I wonder: but is twice too much?  
And if I map the voyage, will the map  
live inside me and annihilate the music?  
Will I ever again feel the wild joy of the journey?  
I'm turning over these steep matters

—when

the conductor springs to the stage,  
we stand and roar with bliss and we're off  
together, catching the wind, heading for  
the horizon where water wavers into  
sky, the great vessel of the symphony  
bucking toward the sheer edge of the  
world (*There Be Dragons*) and I am baffled,  
spellbound, lost again, satisfied to be lost.