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Fireflies

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He arrives in a cradle. And he's hungry. A woman smiles and opens her blouse.

Meanwhile, in this same village, as I think of metaphysical symmetries, a dying old man is being seated into an automobile, slumped forward on the steering wheel; the automobile begins to move down the road, slowly lifting into the sky . . .

Fireflies / A. Poulin, Jr.

The sweet smell of wild strawberries and hay crushed in my back, thirty years ago I'd fall asleep with flashes of fireflies by my bed, a whole tribe of eyes, the guardian angels of my genes.

Now it's winter where I live and each breath I take is rye. While I pray to that terrible dark for sleep, the luciferin light of their deaths and lives still blinks on and off inside the glass of my balding head. The glow of my grandmother's gangrene. My godmother's cells scorched whiter and whiter in her memory. Cancer's blue ember in my father's throat.

I wait for that mysterious fuel to exhaust itself, the almost inaudible click of one worm's corpse falling into final dark.

They won't burn out. They will not die. They flash and flash, a borealis in my clenched eyes.

They carve their shadows in this
glass growing thinner every night.
A spark's ignited at the center of
my skull. Soon we'll all be free.

For You / Daniel Halpern

You are not going to say any more now—
we are in bed and your fingers are closed
between your legs.
My hands are in their chambers.
We are talking with a low-watt bulb burning.
It is not sordid. It is raining.
There is unfriendliness between us
and your long white men's flannels.
For too long there has been cloth
between us.

Later the cat
will move down your length a warm ball of fur
between us. My 800 pound arm
is sex, all man between us.
It is late. It is raining.
Others have conspired in this taking apart.
Objects have kept us
from each other.
In the front room there is an Eve all male.
The feeling here for you is mine
and you are lost,
powerful, unsure—your angry renegade head . . .
You are not sure.

Another Twilight / William Stafford

Sometime you will be in a store,
some evening. The lights will come on
rippling forward, and the shelves
will wait, their still way. Nights