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Cover Art: *Splitting the World*
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Origami Poetry Project™

After Aurora

Howie Good © 2012



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AFTER AURORA

1

Here's the empty room that lived inside him. Here's the key he used to lock it. Here's the black moon that burned in his window. Here's the leaf he heard vibrating all night. Here's the shadow he kept for company. Here's the red hair dye he fed it. Here's the fly that chased through his dreams. Here's the twisted sheets in which he woke up flailing. Here's the trigger he caressed with his finger. Here's the fragment of a planet the cops dug out of the wall.

2

So many of us stumble out of our mothers with stricken faces, all crooked lines & lumpy shadows, that I long ago lost count. In the movie version, I would go off to live among the slandered Western wolves & a fleet of fugitive whales. Everyone in the waiting area is now waiting for a different kind of ending, earbuds in, eyes blank, departure time forever imminent.

3

The movies emblazoned on the marquee had just been changed. At an empty bus shelter, night, naked, forced to wait, was carrying a long metal pole & the leftover black plastic letters. The dead had only one thing to say because they could only say one thing, not "Nighty-night," but "Howdy-do."

4

One guy's telling the other guy about a new porn site, Hotel.cum. I try not to listen too closely. Meanwhile, children keep busy applying for jobs they won't get, in cities they don't want to live. I've begun to think I can feel the detonations of dreams & longings, a rumbling repeated indefinitely. *And those not burned up by death rays*, the guy's saying, *become their slaves*. Summer, the weather unpredictable everywhere you go.

5

Chilly rain rattles down like a metal grate over a storefront. Fist, stick, rock, knife, gun – nothing else grows. Anyone still alive tomorrow will live amid lightning bolts & silent bells.

THE RAINDROP EFFECT

I stare down at the clouds in the puddle. I'm thinking it's easier to buy a gun around here than find a job. Darlene says her name means "little darling." A cold gray light falls across her face, the last task of evening. I can't remember what I did when this happened before. Mine must mean something, too, I say. The trees shake their shaggy heads as if they disagree. I'm glad a canine can be a dog or tooth. I'm hoping it's whichever I say it is.

MANIC

Bank feast! Speed traps! Cable blackouts!
So what?

There are diamonds & sapphires
& barbells in eruption,
& holy shit they're everywhere.

I wait up all night
for just one blast to lift me.

REMNANTS

I try to remember who we're playing. I try to remember which dream this is.

It's impossible to see the scoreboard from where I sit. I must strain to even see some of the field. The crowd waits in a kind of trance for the starting lineups to be announced. I wait for a vendor to toll up the steep concrete steps, shouting, *Cold beer here, a tray strapped like a homemade bomb to his chest*. The man in the seat in front of me abruptly turns around, his expression faded & bleak. *Why's the past so hard to lift?* he asks. I stare off into the distance, pretend he isn't talking to me. A column of black smoke rises beyond the right field wall.

GAME TIME

George, the quiet Beate, arrived back in the Subcontinent by submarine to avoid the press. Despite the coat of dust on everything, winter retained some of its glitter. I leaned over & tumbled up the music. The moon's expression said, *What are you stupid?* Grown-ups were asleep with the doors shut. Which ever street I took, the same high school kid was there, offering to sell me expired meds. A promise still meant something then, jet-age styling, a warm fire, old losing scratch-off tickets looking happy on the ground.