

Prologue

There is a theory
for each of us.

To stop motion,
something heavier must intervene.

Some baggage
has more gravitas.

There is nothing
that won't crush you.

The more you suffer,
the more you remember.

Too much
always turns toxic.

A crisis churns
out opportunity.

Fame promises fun
but is not interesting.

We only pay heed
to what is useful to us.

Colour has always been
a sign of deep pockets.

Nothing will change
until wolves don't eat rabbits.

It is this hunger
that holds us together.

A soundless room
warns of stifled airways.

Sound proselytizes
more efficiently through water

Thresholds of low and high tide—
when current turns back.

Sea
levels out.

Lightning disproportionately
kills men.

The less coordinated
are easy targets.

Dead birds scatter
like candy wrappers.

We are all unintentional
witnesses.

Standing still is the same
as not evolving.

We are insubstantial
to the long view.

What does the heart have to do
with love anyway?

Before a lone note has finished sounding,
it has already travelled 30 miles.

We are all chasing
something.

The universe and everything in it
is expanding.

The question is,
Do I believe you?

Changing one word
significantly influences the answer.

The question is,
Do *you* believe you?

Scientific Predictabilities

Wolf believes science
can predict his fate,

as if distant phenomenon
will tell him something proximate,

whether he'll get that perfect job,
or exactly when she'll pull out.

He listens for imperiled croaks in the night,
specific parts of his brain to light up,

the Latin name for walrus, *Odobenus rosmarus*,
also known as "tooth-walking sea cow."

Bear sits heavy on his thoughts.
Bats hang like heartbeats.

Clouds snag on mountain peaks.
Trees palsy.

Out there, in verity
catastrophe.

Genetic Revelations

Wolf believes we all have mothers,
brothers, sisters, fathers.

But, how to distinguish familial genes
from alien ancestry inhabiting us.

A cataclysm of geese turns inside.
Inside, land animals are their sea creature

counterparts: white wolf and orca; unicorn
and narwhal; lady and manatee. Inside, weather

is consciousness collapsing evolution,
foretelling its own oblivion.

We are continually being remade,
painstakingly, in a cellular sea. Seamless,

that sense of slippage: stars
untethering, moon pinwheeling.

When someone tells us the mountain range
is also tidal wave, why don't we believe them?

The Ultimate Abyss

For Bear, the ultimate abyss is not chasm
in the earth's crust, where deer and whale bones

accumulate at the bottom, but is the internal abyss
left from the loss of a loved one. Impossible

to isolate or navigate, to do anything but gracelessly
hold it at bay with new lackluster.

Nevertheless forgetting, the inevitable.
It's been said that memory is an aviary—

inside our heads, all birds flying,
so you might reach in for a ringdove,

pull a turtledove. Bear swoops in
for a saker falcon, is unsatisfied

with the gyrfalcon. That it's still a dove
or a falcon is cold comfort. Bear's forgotten

all those moments when he's gazed inward
not to see the sky teeming, but deadly empty.

Selfie

An infinite number of Bear
is surely better than one or none.
Bear selfie at the gym.
Bear selfie at the shisha lounge.
Bear selfie at the all-you-can-eat sushi.
Bear selfie with his umbrella,
with his Shih Tzu, under his silky sheets.
Bear selfie below the rotunda
of the National Scottish Museum,
whereby sheep DNA is pulled
from sheep DNA to beget
Dolly the sheep. And now another
Bear. Bear forever. Bear,
where the ongoing matter
comes to replicate. Bear, like Eve,
endlessly in the embrace of atoms.
Bear, naked. Bear, fish gape. Bear,
kissy face. Bear, found-my-light. Bear.
Bear. Bear. Bear, where death
has no domain.

Simon Says

Dr. Simon says, parasites
control our brains. All of us

promiscuous, narcissistic,
cannibalistic, fatalistic. It's impossible

to evaluate who of us is the least
ourselves.

Dr. Simon says, it's these invasive species
that make us: dangle from the highest precipice,

stare transfixed into the deepest pond, throw
ourselves against the most rugged lion's gob.

Fox says, preposterous. She is always herself
and reticent. Deliberate in her choosing.

She *can* and *will* resist Dr. Simon's probing gaze,
his soft simian ways.

Dr. Simon says, it's improbable; though, some
invaders will be tamed, become pliant and loyal pets.

Yes, Fox says, mine protect me, love me,
will be inconsolable upon my demise.

Dr. Simon says, yes, some must obey.

Yes, faithful servants.

Do as I say.

Yes.

Self-diagnosis

After three hours of Wolf holding his horses
he begins to examine himself. Wishes he had a stable

of his own patients to test the stethoscope and defibrillator.
Patience, he is learning, gets him trampled, and kindness

will not be what gets him his dream career, swanky apartment,
or svelte figure. In fact, the doctor is probably eating lunch

back there, pouring over his horoscope. Wolf's hindsight tells him
the flickering neon of the doctor's office sign was not a good sign.

All that light and then beyond the accumulating darkness:
an empty street, a lost body of lake, outer space, oblivion.

His thoughts turn predator—*by design*
cheetabs chase gazelles and gazelles escape cheetabs.

They are end products of an evolutionary
arms race. End products of one another. Instead civilization

is built on suppressing instincts. Choosing your delusion is a strategy
for adaptation. Wolf wants to tell Fox this, but knows better—

his tongue has become wild horse. If he lets it loose it will betray him.

Psychoanalytics

Wolf's shrink thinks therapy only works
when we have a genuine desire to know
ourselves as we are, not as how we'd like to be.

But what if this shriveled self
is also Wolf's higher self? And most of all
what he believes and behaves is motivated
by death? What he calls his undying love, Fox calls
dependency. She asserts, no companionable being
can know what the lone wolf knows. This
feels like a problem Wolf needs to resolve—

He delves deeper inside the diving bell
of his mind. There is no map, no photo, no painting,
no words. Only him in that place, in that moment,
in that precise culmination of happening and thought.
He finally understands, he thinks, when his mind suddenly
spoofs a black hole, and then another blacker hole,
then another—

We cannot all become lone wolves. The universe
is not evil, just indifferent.

Rock Bottom

At rock bottom, even top dogs
buffalo themselves,
sycamores sling cicada pods
like blown bulbs, jack-
daws scoff at perfectly good
chaw. Backlogs of not belonging
bunk on the horizon. Wolf can try
to slough it off
like old wrestling rivals,
or queue-jumpers in the metro.
But what is the telltale sign
for reciprocal altruism?

Strangers and even deeper
unknown stragglers put their arms
around him. There is no shame
in *not* cringing, in leaning *into*
unchartered napes.
The fortitude of this
witnessing brings other bigwigs
to their knees, gives way
to an even more uncouth
blubbing. The train is off
its rails, while Wolf willfully,
even blissfully, nosedives
into all the inadequate blankies.

Butterfly Effect

Wolf believes they will come in the night. The White Admirals, Monarchs, and Swallowtails, ski-masked, steadfastly thwacking

at his visage, as though it's a portal to a new dimension beyond vivisection and display. Wolf plots his retaliation meticulously,

his own mind's eye turned inward toward neurotransmission.

This is called *Executive Functioning*: thinking he can control his future

by devising deeper down the spectroscopy, probing further into the MRI, finally reaching the refuge of his cortical sanctum,

where, he postulates, there can be no whiffle, wisp, or even a what-if of wing.

Learning to Speak

*Things separate from their stories have no meaning.
They are only shapes. Of a certain size and color. A certain weight.
When their meaning has become lost to us they no longer have even a name.*
— Cormac McCarthy

There are thousands of languages
languishing toward extinction

Metropolis after metropolis
silently snow under

In lineups, on buses, on planes
not a word passes between us

Payphone carcasses twist
in backdraft

Our less than adequate satellite dishes
orient outward

They say, *The body is a site
for discourse*

*That similar words unite
clashing colours of any flag*

*But, some bodies speaking
to other bodies become toxic bodies*

*There are words that scrape out
the loveliest earbones*

*Words that smash
the sturdiest structural bits*

*We are already broken
animals*

*Stomped out stamens
of unworthy flowers*

*We breathe out
with dilapidated lungs*

*Late-night debates infect
like bats*

*The last scrap of light
turns gelatinous in our throats*

*Incorporated bodies wave farewell
futilely*

*The colour is Bhopal,
Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez*

*Shova Denko, Rio Tinto,
Hiroshima, Amoco Cadiz*

*They say, It's too late for us
The colour is capital*

*All the way down,
they say*

The colour is cash