

WEATHER

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BIRDS ON THE PATIO FEEDERS, NO. 1

A big wind blows the bird feeders from side to side
and thunder mutters to itself but the day
is as bright as Mensa.

Bare branches resembling veins and arteries
look skeletal as the bony, unfleshed medical figure
who dances only when someone jerks his puppet strings.

That big wind scours the sky as if the sky is a giant kitchen sink.
Trees bend, hanging their heads, sorrowful.
Such drama. Yet we are captivated to see

robins, thrushes—early birds not dissuaded
by the big blow, the rumble of thunder, the Danse
Macabre.

They fly with the flow, so light are they, skidding
among a thousand currents of air, tipping
this way or that, free from gravity

perhaps, or only delicately tied
to grand invisible waves of connection—
or affection, given their shared routes.

The pathways birds—and butterflies—establish
could carry us thousands of miles away and

afar were we able to follow them

and some have done so, lugging cameras

and high-priced computers and taking notes.

Or one may simply watch the birds feeding

at the feeders on one's patio, cardinals

dignified and sometimes even officious,

the finch with his rosy underside, juncos

chasing one another off the little

red schoolhouse that holds birdseed, or the hanging

cylinder that swings every which way in wind.

THE NORTH STAR

Did wise men follow the Star of Bethlehem
to the newborn babe? It's possible, I guess,
but I am more attracted to the notable North Star:
its unchanging beauty, a star frozen
in the sky except that it is not frozen, is
a fury of fire signaling to us
from 323 lightyears away, saying
hello, saying hi there! It tells us
we are not alone.

Of course it's hard to converse
with a star but our excellent telescopes help and
astronomers have taken careful note
of its age and size and other such calculations
and they all agree that it is indeed
a beautiful star born to succeed.

THE NORTH POLE

No, it's not as cold as the South Pole

but it is certainly cold enough.

Any direction you turn in from the Pole

is south, but getting there used to be tough.

Nowadays you may fly to the Pole

or over it. The cold may make you cough.

With a parachute, you can land *on* the Pole.

You'll want to add to your equipment a muff

and stuff, considering that the North Pole

is ageing, its sea ice something like the fluff

of our small dog's coat and certainly cold enough.

SLEET

Sleet walks a narrow boundary between snow and ice,
including black ice, which can be treacherous.

My husband, driving to Wisconsin on
no sleep, flipped his car on slick black ice.

Cops called to tell me. Fortunately, he was fine,
if late. Sleet is something like a snake,
so subtle and sneaking through grass and unpicked corn.

Pellets of ice crunch beneath our boots.

But hail? Hail is larger and ruinous.

Meanwhile, sleet is not un-ruinous.

VALENTINE'S DAY

Milk Chocolate, please. Not dark.

Of course, many do prefer dark.

But for or against, we can co-exist.

It's not like America and the Soviet Union.

We're not going to blow each other up.

We're just going to nibble chocolate.

THIS SHOULD BE WINTER

This should be winter but it feels like summer.
Not spring: summer. Not fall: summer. Not
Indian summer: summer. Thirty or forty
years from now, we may all be heading north
in search of water, in search of air that can
be breathed, in search of food that's not been wrecked
before it's harvested. Animals
will come with us if they've not already
gone ahead. This does not mean we don't
like the current status, which is warm
but not too warm, more like early summer
than corn-shucking, hay-riding weather,
but what the shuck, it's hotter day by day
unless there's rain and rain we want sometimes
and at other times would prefer it not.

RAIN

It falls. Sometimes quietly, sometimes loudly
as bullets hitting targets, or soldiers in war.

A sprinkle doesn't even seem like rain.

It does an almost silent dance, then stops,

demure as a virgin. The breaking thunderstorm
rails at everyone, but the daylong soak

that rescues trees, flowers, and failing farms
sings a song both simple and everlasting.