At some point, a division
in the world: me, & not-me.
One, two, one, two, my daughter
repeats after me. One last

sleeping pill, two bottlecaps
in a pill jar when I couldn’t find
your rattle. Three concussions
that I know of, maybe others

that went undiagnosed, times
I’d hear a distant singing,
a lone voice, see a sudden
color burst. There are five

truly essential questions,
someone once said,
first is: wait what? Question
everything, I tell her,

on my shoulder, almost asleep
again after crying out at 2 a.m.
Second question is I wonder;
followed by why, or if;

as in I wonder why you won’t sleep,
why God is most distant
in the small hours of the night,
as my grandmother asked me

one afternoon, six months ago,
five before her death. Five
essential questions, I’ve used
too many & not enough in my life,
in the meantime we’ll count
to six key changes in Beyoncé’s
“Love on Top,” fingers & toes,
stations of the cross, then hours
in the day & days
in the desert, & on to 96,
the years of her life, & if you’re
not sleeping by then, to 240
bodies in a grave in Velacruz,
& on to a little less than
three grand, what I owe the IRS,
& on to the hangings in Syria,
15,000 & counting, we are
always counting, it’s like
counting the rain. And today
is the day for the uncountable,
Pi Day, 3/14, let’s say we translate
the numbers into ASCII text,
not only is the day of my death
buried somewhere in the digits,
but an infinite number of deaths,
tomorrow, or the next day,
the day after I walk you down
the aisle or the day after,
will there be so many, darling,
doesn’t it seem like it all gets away
from us, I’ll count a little longer
even though you’re asleep.
And when a god allowed it to speak
one of Achilles’s two immortal horses
said a god had killed
its mortal chariot mate, & that Achilles, too,
would be struck down by a god.

And they wept when Patrokles died.
And three midnights now I’ve waked from a dream of two horses,
brown mare & little sorrel,
hardly ten hands high,
that lived next to me when I was a child,
three midnights now
I’ve waked to walk the windows of the house—
as I once did, as a child, to find my grandmother walking the house,
who learned English by memorizing the Psalms,

I will both lay me down in peace & sleep,

for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.
Tonight or this morning a mourning dove,
even this late, even this early,

poor-mouthing our riches,
our memories, our past days,
even as, there—
& there, my daughter, hardly two hands,
my hands, at two months, cries out in her sleep,

soft as the weeping of a deathless horse.
We dream more in the first three years

of our lives than the rest, but where do they go,
where are the dream horses stabled?
Somewhere close to the mercies we’ve been shown,
maybe, the ones we didn’t deserve.

Tomorrow’s already here,

on our skin, our tongues,
baker’s hour, hangman’s,
& I’ve given up on tonight’s,
but there’s another sleep, love, 
    one I’m closer to 
than you, if all goes right, if we’re lucky or good,

& though I’ve asked the dream horses 
when it’s my time to go, 
they, like Xanthus, like the future itself, 
have been struck dumb.
They Say Every Strad’s Different,

each with a wood grain like a fingerprint
or a galaxy’s light pattern. This one
cages a dove with a chicken bone
in its throat, morning joy tinted
with the sorrow of what follows
the 18th century.
This one holds a nightfall where the resurrected
meet like shadows in alleys.
Another, I’ve heard, a small city, where the cathedrals
are filled with crickets.

And now the waters rise within this one
as the bow is drawn across its strings—

there go the coffins downstream, drowned cattle,
bathtubs & crosses from church steeples

(the universe itself is dreaming,
as you have, that it’s a small boat on the great river—
sometimes we call that boat the soul).

And there was a Strad once, stolen,
smuggled on a boat
to Morocco, then sold to an oil tycoon in Russia,
who kept it in a secret compartment
in an armored limousine—

but you, you have come from an even greater distance
to be here in your life
& not even know the shadows,
or what the rain is dreaming,
which is why we turn again to the stage,

to the raised bow, as the names
of everyone who has ever fallen from the sky

begin to be recited
in a language you’ll learn as soon
as you lose everything.
What sense of lack says open this ground,
this is where the white lilacs go,

open the window, it’s snowing, therefore
the shadows from Sonny Stitt’s horn

bop their way down the street, a migration
like the journey of the old runes,

*thorn, eth & ash* et al.,

that traveled across the years, through dreams
& sacked cities
to become Old English letters,
or that of the words inside this phone,
where a bit of want bends

the letters, so *experience* autocorrects to *corrientes* (ocean
or electric currents, common, or running),

*going* somehow becomes *gnosis* —

isn’t the gnosis of going

all about loss?
And it is—if it’s here a hundred years ago in Denton,
where the black families of Quakertown were forced across the tracks:

houses bumped at a rattler’s pace on the rollers:
one woman, Mary Ellen, refused to leave her house,
& sat in her parlor rocking chair the whole journey,
while her Henry jogged alongside the house:

they started again with their lack,
with cuttings from their white lilac bushes.

Lilacs to lilacs, drift of lost ruins & vowels, is it grief or need that blooms
in the wound opened by these distances?
Spaces made of the want they’re opened by,

by the years that fall through us soundlessly,
endlessly, like the snow outside,

white petals upon the air.
with his mouth sewn closed,

half-moon a bone borne aloft
on a bier of thistle,

the last of the commuters begin to head home on the Texas superhighways—

hell’s half acre
if we’re going by heat,
& if the other half’s
our regrets & unkept promises—

home to the suburbs, thinking on the past—
their heads fixed backwards,
as if it’s the eighth circle
of the underworld,

the one with the fortunetellers, diviners,
the ones who couldn’t see it coming.

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Did they see a woman returning yesterday
to the slave cabin she was born in,

87 years in between these two days?
Or Charlie Murphy tweeting release the past to rest
as deeply as possible
the night before he died?
One to sleep on, it began. Another one
to sleep on—

the ashes of Bob Probert sprinkled in the penalty box
at the Joe, before they tore it down.
He fought with a grinning heart
& a right hand like a hammer, never mind

the feather, the heart will be weighed against
what we turned away from,
who we couldn’t face.

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There’s a black cat fix for every frack well, someone said before we voted on drilling this town, but there’s none for remorse, only long grass on the grave of the shooters, the famous ones, the ones who hit the Indians from a mile out, long grass & a high noon, so it’s about the time Christ forgave the penitent thief—

so maybe there is a fix. Or maybe eternity’s a rain-wrapped angel come down to tell you there’s no eternity. Sometimes he’s selling oranges on the freeway onramp for a dollar. A buck, then the otherworldly scent, citrus or myrrh. After hunger, & the world, & the self itself, the last renunciation is the smallest, smaller than a snakebite.

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And the door to heaven is even smaller, if you can find it, locked except to the touch, & if you do, remember me.

And the moon, from Jordan to Jerusalem, clear as chrism oil half a second after the blessing, the moon sets even in hell, even here, one to sleep on, with nothing but new blooms for company, new blooms & a little rain out of nowhere, just now, empty streets & the company of heaven.