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Directions for the Day

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August and early gloom,  
eon haze from the grocery  
on Higgins. My bedroom wall  
watches back, three prints  
made by an unknown girl  
whose hands knew elephant,  
giraffe and bear.  
For directions, try green,  
color of broken fields,  
color of her eyes  
when they glanced up  
into the 9:15 out of Butte.  
Perhaps when that light  
touched her hair the final time  
it spelled because.  
The ambulance bill came.  
I sent it back,  
and, for a moment,  
her animals looked afraid.  
Then, the giraffe leaned  
on the paper tree. Her elephant  
sank back into his river.  
I saw the bear fade  
into a black wood of drawn color.  

Far to the east  
I imagine New York,  
Hudson turning yellow in shadow  
of brick and steel.  
Three clowns on the lamb  
mumble about Big Tony.  
In that life  
I won’t fret over dead farms.  
I won’t think easy for Donna  
climbing the walls in Illinois,  
her husband five months  
in the basement with no name.  
Tweetie should have gone out  
better than a Labor Day crash,  
the men who dug those babies  
from his bumper
could have cried more,
though never enough to hold
the sky in place. I confess
the world has little care
for sweethearts groping air
on a blank road.
It's true, on the seventh day
God rested. Maybe
He threw up His hands
and quit, maybe the claymores
gashed His heart
another day, when Bruce
lay down to die.
One time in a mirror
I looked old, crow's feet
fake when I squint
at the marbled glass.
Other than the prints, she left
a box of beads, a book of Yeats.
My crime to speak in a trumped-up way
about the dead, the wind
we hold in our hands and bless.