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The End of an Era

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The End of an Era · *James Tate*

When your address book starts to fall apart
you know it's the end of an era.
When the dead or lost determine your days
then it should be decided that this is
the end of an era. Buy yourself some new shirts,
it can't hurt. Let a perfect stranger
cut your hair, what do you care? The newspapers

can't think up any new headlines. Call it
the end of an era just to get something going,
to get people thinking, to at least consider
abandoning the plan. Suddenly it *feels*
like the end of an era, like something you don't
have to say goodbye to, it's just gone.
It's not like a pet getting run-over, that's

a specific pain and it will fall into place—
the street, the traffic, the odds. When
an era ends, nobody decides anything,
a terrible ooze accumulates, and a private, unspoken
nausea takes over. We awake to how wrong
everything has become, our best dishes
mean nothing, and, still alone, we cry:

“I want to break out of the Grief Motel!
I want to kick out the windows of the Grief Motel!”

Life is a muscular, tear-wrenching thing
at the end of an era.