

1991

Orphans

Mark Halperin

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Recommended Citation

Halperin, Mark. "Orphans." *The Iowa Review* 21.2 (1991): 89-89. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4017>

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Two Poems · *Mark Halperin*

ORPHANS

In Tallinn, in a small town in Pennsylvania,
in Matsue the lives I cast off like clothes
lie in casual heaps beside the still warm beds.

I went on somewhere else, here, but the life
I left the way I put down a glass entering
another room, meaning to come back for it,

still anticipates my hand or body. Maybe
in one of those places a man looks up from
his reading expecting me to enter, or a woman

rounding a corner pauses beside old stones
for a second, thinking it's me crossing the square.
And maybe only the streets wait, only the trees

arching above them. Some mornings, groggy
from sleep, uncertain which life is mine, I turn
as bigamists must, wondering just whose embrace

I will enter. My son has bashed the car door,
my wife glowers. Does a will to evasion pull
or is it one of those lives left standing open,

junctions, discontinued branches, uncompleted,
hanging fire, waving desperately, occasions
and orphaned possibilities only I am missing from?