Autumnal

Thomas Swiss
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What was it that
Struck me as curious
On the road, returning home?

It was late afternoon,
Cold for September, so
I had the heater

Turned on in the car: it gave off
That awful chemical odor
Machines make after long rest.

The trees, I noticed,
Had not yet begun
To turn as the light had.

Against the roughly-cut,
Overlapping buildings—
Creating a modest skyline—

The light was angled and going out
Earlier than I last remembered.
I’d just had my hair cut

At the airport. I was thinking
Of physical comfort:
A bath and shave,

Sitting down to supper.
But the road became strange
As I passed by water—
“Grey’s Lake” the sign said,
It seemed suitably named.
Cars in the distance
Crossed the bridge in a line—
Over the Iowa River, rising,
All of us coming home.

Home, then, in my comfortable study,
I tried to get that
Feeling down. I urged it on,

But could only write: Today
The light pointed
Towards something important.

Or was it the water?
I verged on understanding
And was held.