

Orbits  
Julian Day

**MODEL**

## Tremors

Halfway around the world you listen to her heartbeat,  
your head resting against her chest.

A decade since you offered me your couch,  
a week together off Rue Saint-Dominique.

For years I told myself my happiness  
required I be dishonest about my wants.  
At night the songbirds turn inside their nests.  
I dream about a different kind of life.

## Grey Mare

I'm not gone, but I'm working on it.

Each spring, a familiar routine.

Gather-and-break: the killdeer's con.

This year the pack ice travels further than me.

No matter the spin, my whole world a stone's throw from the morning.

The hours' quick unfolding. The evening scratching at the door.

I'm still here but I'm gone. I'm not gone but I'm trying.

Working my way back to something half-remembered,

the future dim but still guessable, a mummer's parade,

my own place glimpsed through the jaws of a Mari Lwyd:

left tending our silence; our cold, dark rooms.

## April

Winter now an island in the centre of the pond.

Geese, ducks, sparrows, the fencetops lined with blackbirds.

Gray partridges in the yard. Insistent calling. Thump-and-flutter.

My sixteenth year in this scattered city.

The two of us yesterday, and today, and in a thousand years.

Flooding in California. How many more of these springs?

The past rhyming, revealed in birdsong and meltwater.

## August 98

When the dopamine died, and the heat  
of us cooled.

When you came to visit, the Brown-eyed  
Susans yellow-bright.

When we briefly caught fire,  
burning both

*with and out*, our phosphorescence  
heady/empty glow.

## Palm Lines

How much can you internalize? Turns out, a lot. Weeks to candlewax, months to their commit hash. It's June and for reasons I can't discuss I can smell the lilacs. I'm 20 feet up. My silence loud and unseasonable. There's a trick to this, as to everything. My life stretches across the tracks like a run of bad odds. I drive till dawn and wait for trains. All the times I didn't speak. The ways we feel the pull. I leave my thoughts out like a saucer of fresh milk. Failure becoming generative, instructive. A long list. My personalized plan. What we don't survive, survives us. Read my palm lines. Count the declining stars.

## Instructions for Forgetting

You're here because you know  
time heals nothing. Long days, long nights,  
your wick guttering like a candle  
burned down to its end. Past want and sleep  
you find yourself hunched in lamplight, lost  
to a flickering screen. Here phrases  
and images come unbidden:  
something unseen, pulsing  
in the dark.

To forget is to release.  
Think back to the early net  
and your answer's in an unlinked textfile,  
etched in its green-on-black.  
Years ago the thin boy told you about  
the true names of angels; these lie  
ossified in ancient drives,  
waiting on a word. Interest  
breathes intent. What's latent  
can still be. Mouth the letters.  
Shake their pinioned wings.

This is the way back you always wanted, the return  
that can't be undone. Place a verbena flower  
under your tongue, trace the pentagram,  
and draw your dagger down. Hold  
in your mind all the intervening years  
then speak what's to be gone.

The boy talked about a wrenching sensation,  
the feeling of being grasped.

This is coming, too. Stay very still.

Tomorrow's warm and sweet.

A white thing breaks the air.



## SAD

The aging god of late summer steps out of the drainage pond, brushing off mud and flapping fish. We stare at each other uneasily: *this again? Already?*

He sighs in apology, opens a silver case of cigarettes. They're soggy but still light. We share a smoke, watch people saunter by. I nod at him. My dog pulls at its leash.

## Winter Solstice

the nights now colder  
our lives now shorter  
the unsaid closing  
and knocking at the door

## Autobiography in Travel

I always say: *later, later*. This frustrates my wife, as it would have frustrated you, the seasons passing impersonally as a palette swap. I have no defense. I offer only a dream, a recurring dream. In it I lie within the dim lights and grey steel of a spacecraft. A last survivor, my body kept asleep by artificial means. Time later for travel. Why worry now? All around me the screens flicker soft and green. The stars are outside and they're in me. My body flying past the rings of Jupiter.

## Orbits

She clicks Incognito, just to see  
what he's up to, what makes him  
happy, if he'd even remember, just

as he falls asleep elsewhere  
in a cold side room, dreaming again  
of that night lost together, caught up  
in their wild and tempestuous weather.

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