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JUST ONCE I'D LIKE TO SNEAK UP ON THE WIND—

Rob Carney

—there must be something tucked in its pocket:
a memory I've somehow forgotten,

or the shape of a promise, the quiet heart
of smooth stones.

And I wish I could translate the ocean,
all that it's learned about blue,

about the seagull's wing.

Though it takes eight years for the sea to say *feather*,

and longer to answer its questions about fire,
I'd wait like a granite cliff

and write it down.

I'd like to know what sun thinks, shining

through a yellow dress . . .

if it feels the same to trace a body as a peach.

Can it taste a whole orchard?

Can it sense it's the season in Yakima?

Can it go in search of a willow?

Imagine sitting in the shade?



What is the meaning of meaning?

A river.

That's it?

Well, maybe a wide enough one to skip rocks.



Best Peach I've Ever Eaten:

eighteen years ago, the Pike Place Market,
an August morning in Seattle

with a breeze lifting off of the Sound,
the Sound between two mountain ranges,

and crossing ferries looking perfect on the water . . .
silent white to match the snowcaps . . .

and then that first bite.



I don't know what Disney Land costs these days,
but twenty years ago

it was twenty-five bucks.
So that settled it.

It really put things in perspective.
I ditched class,

and we hitched to Santa Monica,
and it turned out—

who would've thought it—
Mike was right:

some flight school was only charging twenty
to learn to fly . . .

for the first time, anyhow.

Their angle was to get you up in the air

and get you hooked so you'd sign on for lessons,
but no chance of that—

the two of us both flat broke—
and in the meantime . . .

in the meantime, we'd get to fly:
thirty minutes each in a two-seat Cessna,

and once you're off the ground,
the stick's all yours.

And it was easy.

Well, easy enough you could relax

and bank the plane away west
at nothing but blue and clouds, and the smog lost behind you . . .

nothing but sunlit water
however far below

and a small black shadow of the plane there,
sailing across that glimmering. . . .

I'd call it a pretty good day, you know?

I'd call it *Sometimes you fall in a miracle.*



Somewhere in your city there's a rooftop
and on that rooftop a garden

and in that garden is a color
no one's ever named.

This isn't a test.
And you won't gain any money.

But let's say choosing that color's name
is up to you—



Some day I'd like to play chess with the rain
to see if there's a pattern.

And I'd like to ask a barn owl where it lived
before there were barns.



which reminds me of a story:
In a harbor town, there was a carpenter

building houses without kitchens.
When no one wanted to live in them,

he got mad, made a canoe,
and paddled away to a nearby island,

built a bright-red octagon watchtower,
then set about shaping a thousand arrows and a bow.

Nobody noticed his manifestos—the flaming darts
he'd arc nightly into the bay—

and if anyone did,
he'd have just shouted, "Truth and Art

speak for themselves.
What's the matter; can't you hear?"

And that's the end of the story.
Pretty typical, I guess.

But perhaps if he'd built homes with kitchens,
even porches,

and a few well-balanced tables . . .
if he'd gone ahead and fashioned bunk beds

or chair swings
or simply the here-and-there bench . . .

if he'd bothered sometimes to make picture frames,
to shape fiddles as a craftsman,

perhaps the town would've gathered . . .
made him welcome wherever he went . . .

one of them bringing her accordion,
another a drum or harmonica,

others for hours in the horseshoe pitch,
others for hours on guitar,

and children there adding to the music
like wind chimes,

and, yes, I know; that's a common story also.
But it's common like an ice-chest full of beer.



A Running List of Things I Need to Thank:

the God of Gravity
for moving some to be acrobats;

the God of Summer Vegetables
made manifest in corn;

the God of Collision—
creator of football and molecules—

and all the underdog Gods
of All the Overlooked . . .

I need to thank plenty.
I need to thank sharks,

for you were my first fascination.
And everyone, starting with my parents,

who taught me to read.
And all our talismans

so patiently pretending.
And wind

for fitting a piece of itself in my hand.



What is the meaning of meaning?
Nothing you can measure.

What's the meaning of meaning?

You can't count time with time.

Did you hear me? I want to know the meaning of—

A shoreline.

That's it?

A shoreline stretching

farther than you see.

But surely there's—

Yes, there's more.

You walk along looking for shells—just listen—

you walk along looking for shells.

The kind you want to keep.