

## Wonderments

by [Peter Cooley](#) in the [January 2024](#) issue

*Our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration.*

—Sir Thomas Browne,

*Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial*

A day of quiet wonder in my hands  
holding nothing but bewilderment  
at the green world knocking on my window—  
I am alive! fresh from harrowing  
my address book, a kind of columbarium  
page-after-page, of the too-soon-  
too-many-dead. Bob, heart attack,  
at fifty-five, Amelia, throat cancer, sixty,  
Jane, double-vaccinated, Covid, seventy,  
all of them here, then a moment, suddenly—

suddenly, even the long death of my mother  
I watched, while I sat beside her  
weeks, with the hospice nurse, dazed,  
then suddenly, her eyes glazed over,  
a yellow glare of translucent cellophane  
all her gaze, transfixed on mine  
as if she'd seen enough of me for a while—

In a minute now I will go out  
into the terrible gift of the sun

just one of my unaccountable, unasked for—

If I disbelieved in coincidence,  
which I do not, I might think it coincidental,  
not heaven-sent that this is the first  
day of Spring and this afternoon  
I will need to buy a new, gold-embossed  
leather-bound address book,  
if they still sell such antiques,  
one which will outlast my being here.

In the life to come, I believe  
I will look back on this, look down on this,  
wondering while I was here  
how long I thought I might need  
that address book, its inchoate,  
un-fingered, immaculate, sheer white pages—