

Election Year

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We fell asleep reciting modest prayers.
No one would ask for our deliverance
Outright, to have the age-old mortal plot
Upended by some lenient decree.
We had accepted the unassuming days
We had known until then, the time and chance
Each sees between conception and decay.

We had enjoyed a home, a livelihood,
Stability, some friends to alienate,
Spouses to find, families to disappoint.
But the times were there, for those with eyes to see.
The young, without restraint, assured themselves
It could not happen, while, wary of confidence,
Their elders held out with “Well, not again.”

We woke to the river in our second floor,
The last of five still standing in the street.
The hills were stark, swept of humanity,
And the roads closed off like borders, shutting us in.
We huddled, prompted each other through the rote
Appropriate passages from the prayer book,
And reckoned where we were from the tops of trees.

We’d spurred each other to faith, and yet were dashed
Like vessels of wrath—and not because He’d failed.
Teach us to pray when punishments are gifts,
When the wind blows where it wills, and strikes
The corners, crushing everyone inside,
When the old, adequate ways are shaken free
By abounding grace or disproportionate wrong.

For the wind is utterly free, and the water moves
Dispassionately through us on its way to sea.
The balder the lie, the more will be given to say,
And the greater the theft, the more remains to steal.
We’d cast our lots, and only thought them votes.
Now, we held the sum of our communities
And carried them with us onto rescue boats.