After the Deluge and Weekend

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After the Deluge

He’s there in the backyard waiting for the sky to clear. Under the aluminum ramada, he slouches, yawns, as if trying to remember some unimportant something that, anyway, he knew would be forgotten. It’s Thursday, nearly four. A few school papers have slid from his backpack onto the lawn. They lie amidst the unmowed flower heads, rain-sponged skeletons of thistle and buckthorn, blown-out dandelions, the ruins of summer. This is the world created for him. A brown butterfly, wings rusted shut, clings to the underside of a branch of the bare Japanese plum. When he tries to coax it onto his finger, it falls to earth with his touch, like a Rosicrucian hope. If he could invent a companion, would he still try out these postures of boredom? Perhaps he’s thought there is no one who remembers being with him that day in the cypress grove where he found the monarchs clinging together like braids of paper in the mist and called everyone over to see what the sea breeze could not blow down. What discoveries of risk.

In the dimming afternoon he watches the arc of clouds, wind riffling the palms, and touches with his fingertips a red splotch that has formed on the side of his chin, then extends his hand in front of him to test if the air is dry enough to go out in.
Weekend

The light is left on over the table.
One rose in a plastic vase
shriveled as a red star. We have brought
the history of our feelings here,
the withheld words. We’ve come to bear
all, to see nothing. We have permission.
The earth spins without noticing.
It’s always the same bullshit,
she says. The bombings, the petty
wars. The city is ringed by artillery.
We scavenge for what we can find;
a rough crust, green meat
we would at another time
go out of our way to avoid.
The clouds a mass of spittle.

We are learning the laws of supply and demand.
There is need; there is always
need. She opens her arms
and I enter. The craters still warm
on the streets where the shells
have fallen. Our words are rubble.
We pick around jagged entrails
of metal. We’ll grasp any splinter,
anything smoke has shined.
We live without a thread,
without a pattern. When we lie
down, we are flat as flags,
an unclaimed country
where the language has shattered.
Where we could almost imagine the names
for love.