

Peripheral Daydream:
*A Sequence Following Bei Dao's **Daydream***

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Peripheral Daydream

Following Bei Dao's Daydream (Trans. Klein & Eshleman)

1.

Rust covers a layer of leaves
Your face beneath a calendar page
rubs your shadows into plaster
a palimpsest of rough drafts
transition to an inorganic record
There's always more away to be than here
Stonefruit hollow at the core
I climb my own Adam's apple

another's, an invisible orbit
dew coats a line of tanks
a neck, broken on the frame
birds behind each hour
pendulum, an organ
the clockface, an alluvial deposit
draws relentlessly on
collects each night into one liquid room

2.

A ghost knitted into your sheet music
subsists on vapor and ash
gap-toothed to facilitate reversal

bring a knife to a bowl of fruit
--no heart's left to have
no poison to grow a tree into
go solar lacks flare
a rock garden in a greenhouse
an underwater scene, out from under

the weather, no way
to scrub the kids out of the fixtures
rain's forecast
to be broadcast from elsewhere
I'll suck in these allergens
collapse
and try to reiterate myself
These I
that I are

3.

Nothing but pages
in a sonambulist anthology
a clock's loose arms
go slack when the alarm sounds

time to cheer up
there's no scenery to be inhibited by
we're all here
all where
the road curves
into a museum set-piece
amber encased-
a silkworm cacaphony

getting up must be awkward
beside me
times call for a pre-funerary revival--
all this motion gets us nowhere

4.

There's always more away to be than here
to split not out but open
at sea for a minute
almost too easy
lit up

a portable set without reception
static tuned in like foil
to see yourself hold the door ajar
forecast as malediction
all sputter and stop
enter through the wrong opening

like the right words on foreign pages
staying always ahead
a digit in the footer
--25e
I'm in the middle
you're at the window; you're in the aisle

5.

The face is what follows after the fact
worn down by friction rather than care
no less whole for shaving some off
a timeshare in nowhere
stay awhile and this too will be beachfront
I can't say it'll all wring out but
there's more skin beneath the skin so slough
enough to hang around by
you can chum the rafters for whatever's biting
electricity's a cheat when the line goes dead
so goes another old chestnut, I guess
give my regards to the buffet line

It's loudest right now
as the vehicle clears the embankment
the rapids rush to meet it
of all the people you could have been, you're you

6.

A new round of commons
open in on themselves
a book, a list, a catalogue
of misplaced items

people who gather there unfamiliar
in half-lived families

so spread the lattice wider
sunlight ships to the factory for enrichment
crossroads all end the same way
conversations come to a point

Your urges urge me to mine
only to bury the waste in a hollowed-out mountain
seven, maybe, or eleven
a close shave, past due
we conduct a raid on the bug emporium
incepticide

7.

Some memories are clearer than others
gravity's rarely this capriciously
absent
I wasn't there where I was
of a certain age
but I left from that place shortly after
traded in livestock
on the floor of the exchange
I'm not writing this so I can read it

today
the print's bars are wider than usual
now there's a face to replace it
the gas is on but the pilot's out
don't look at me like that
eternity's too long to spend lighting a match
in this manufactured darkness

8.

Did the calendar overflow its banks
abscond with the still-smouldering embers?
a fixed point and a secondhand satellite
an infirmary thoroughbred half-unwound
Drive a point through the breast of a pit-quarry
quicksilver from cinnabar
second-seat in a black widow orchestra
newborns parachute in
set the ground ablaze wherever they land

Did the calendar overflow its banks
and divert precious resources to urban centers?
Pull your pants up
this is a diorama in a family museum
where you find yourself
stuffed and mounted
hardly seen by hoards of schoolkids
still your DNA can be extracted
let's hope something like you may live again

9.

surrender to the next viable date
and turn out about as reliable--
I'm down to nothing but these vocal chords
and we're all to be dented in
and installed – an ICU VIP
the woods are all sick with it
all this free time and open space
rockgut leeches into the groundwater

orations crowd each other out
move straight into a circular argument
parthenogenesis – and why not?
If it is a will it might as well go on living
vibrate without a sound
three sides of the same coin
and not a dime to stand on
one by one the sounds of us go quiet

10.

It's hard to get a grip on respiration
and needlepoint's no better
so let's tie up the ironworks
and let the furnaces cool in a vacuum
light can't or won't escape
all in the quiver point to intended targets

everyone in the cemetery has seen this cartoon
horror's eventually monotonous
the antecedents
because you left their mouths open
are stored in the cathouse Oh you topiary reliquary

your calendar's not officially sanctioned
one fruit hangs from one branch
dead birds surround the rootball
and fly to branches when shadows get to be too much
nothing proves terribly exceptional

11.

What dwindles stirs the loins, but the other direction
a *dénouement* that shrinks the limbs into the trunk
and chokes the wind as it leaves the leaves

sucks moisture from your cheek
a fish takes a plunge into desert sand
I'm bottom trawling another glorious sunset
passion leaves me grammarless
I self-immolate but forget to say what for

my gut is hardly an effective fuel
salt in a glass but what I drink
returns me to where I started – a kind of turn
you fall away from – be

tangled in the canopy
two streamers of the same marine layer
burn off together
yellow diamonds say nothing inside

12.

A ghost of just your outer garments
locates its own habit at
a diagram showing how the organ malfunctions
releases its hold
on another exquisitely dry meal
peaks lose their places in migration
scribbles disappear faster than their authors
even the edges of things revise themselves
my shadow's autobiography differs from mine
just as the ritual face you wear wears away
and the bloom depends
on how you mourn all untrue connections
If this was really your face
why would you want to watch?
Precipice, when your tenuous form meets itself
its pattern of flight will give it away

13.

Read by the light of self-illuminating insects
they fight their own battles
tip toward an equator that shifts beneath them
armies start above ground before heading below
into caves made by exposed roots, the same sun
around, the same exoskeleton encrusts it

no doubt searching for water
means the skins get worn a little looser
and shots fired just wander, having lost the way

we fade in stasis, cranium on a dimmer switch
wax the satellite until it gleams
and still there are bugs to chase from the bushes
that drone like cicadas
we've left a long, subterranean dream
so sing until the song hollows us out and nests there

something untoward bypasses the route
we take to return to to the livery
The soldier fly spills its guts on the page

14.

No ship will return to this spit
white expanse stays white
even as it's spackled with germs that eat it through

so what's underneath shines out, this and that
a honeycomb in a coffeecup
peaks that rise no higher than a bedroom window

it's still hard to breathe here
the composites arrange to choke us out
all surface, and surface before that

I need a lever small enough to move dust
rocks reel and spin
ballet looks no better in nightmare

words must stop before full impression's felt
the cave wall's no menagerie
fish snake into the darkest sockets
and turn them on

15.

mouthfuls of stars sink to the bottom
even as levees strain to hold the lip of this cup
I'm steeping in, you

see, I heal over irregularly
stuck in the muck of your footprints
I'm transported, grain by grain
a mess of tissue
compressed into something that can cut

a little extra space within a larger space
somehow, we're still in this together
wrapped like spring rolls
we stuff ourselves into every maw
that insists on carrying a tune to turn to

there's always more away to be than here
levees will eventually give
lodge bits of bone under my skin

16.

All my possessions are at the end of the track
and thin doesn't always mean *sinemy*

clever trick for a bird of prey
but it's no good equating hunger with the hunt

ancestors studied their own tongues
and used their bones to draw conclusions

on we go, we go on
stay together through the next set of rapids

It's stupid to fight with only one
season

so look for me in your caterpillar tread
a culture of moping

spigot in the cinnabar spilling
one more thing to wake up from

poor cartographer...as if there is any other kind

17.

Time flies while we gather moss
but dawn's still just around the corner
the wind here has teeth like a comb
and winds itself up without moving
on-again, off-again, a two-note crescendo
on the roof with no fiddle again
chew a nut until the calm returns
as you age, your passages restrict

Seen space between bars for what it is, now
have you? Pages are assigned
without speaking a word
but what you hear fans out
until it swamps the calendar for good
rend to own
the map is not the legend
the legend is a place you can't get back to
the body impaled on the astrolabe
finds a hollow place and fails to fill it

18.

torn-up sidewalk working a taxed dollar
inertia's path-
os, though others claim it,
it freezes at room temperature

a rumor some attribution
a plumb some fuse
cracker my cracker
goodnight breathe tight

languish draped in many forms
clears a path through the checkout aisle
some stay folded while others open
two mirrors clash in the night

gravity has its way even here
bowling me over and over
a color called '*cigarette ash*'
evangelism's impetus, yet again

19.

The world reverses itself
so now there's somewhere to go
and another's mouth to inhabit
like a model home, it is echoey
slanting every which way

Is that enough time for a tree to take?
Can a cave generate its own weather?
Why brood underground-
unless you have a shortcut there
two times, overlapsed.

Just a little of you cut away
distorting as it melts
obsidian heartburn
dressage in threadbare attire
ahead of a coronal mass ejection

No need to panic
these frames can be stitched together
Any one thing's equal to any other

20.

Shared between shepherd and sheep
an unsubstantiated ruminant
heats up until it sheds its tether
so I'm constellated--
I can better see the stars this way
confined on only four sides
the weight of what I'm not hearing
is what holds us all in common
the ungainly and the ungulate
the predators with all their protestations
the vacuum is unpopulated
as far as vision will allow
though the river may yet return to bed
and I may read the signals
as I do my empty books
wise bumpkins
you bring your own lines to the banks

21.

All closed beneath their lids
tucked in shade
the vegetables nonetheless listen

first shot to cross the line
now you're *here*

and we have to eat without leaving a mark
or guess which cup contains the poison
--all these words sanitize the stench

but I'm still impressed how you got it up there
and how undistorted we remain below

Sheep just shows how little you know sheep
crypsis in field or pulpit
stand tall, incognito

take some photos to show you almost found it
even though the coup was flown

A new trick to replace stigmata
shadows just track movement
your job is to collect the pieces

22.

brash in refusal--
the mute takes to the loudspeaker
thinks the ending is pat
just a bodycount
and theatrical effects using ropes and cats
revamp the graticule
it means other than how it sounds

winter licks the streetlamps
up and down the block, one and the same
a surprise for the mail carrier
duck inside the shipping container, now
it's early for a home
germ-free and unhealthy
Doc, under "Cause" write "be--"

You were right, the ending *is* pat
If this is my hoard, than what does that make me?

23.

The façade is more than just a clockface

even as I finish what I'm about to think
it melts on impact
oh mourners out on Halloween
please spare me the group hug
is this to be a pagan holiday
or just a poor excuse for a bonfire?

Move, be it to march or dirge
knucklebone drumstick
direct my gaze
your face is familiar
do you want to trade?
this bird folded into a sheet of paper
awaits your answer...
Some things don't change

There's always more away to be than here

Author's Note:

These poems draw their inspiration from Bei Dao's sequence, *Daydream*, translated by Lucas Klein and Clayton Eshleman. The method of creating my sequence follows a form I deem "peripheral poetry." The poems were constructed by my writing a new line of poetry that responds to, or plays off of, each line of Bei Dao's poems. My poems are not intended to be translations or reworkings of the original poems, but rather something like ripples or echoes that exist, somewhat tenuously, at the edges of these other poems. They are, in one sense, a form of reading.

