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## A Few More Things I Should Have Learned from Vallejo

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of a passing car  
that might have me nodding  
confidently to curlews  
and godwits skimming the spindrift below the cliff—  
some line  
for which I could congratulate myself  
and walk over to the wine shop  
for an honorable, if affordable, bottle  
from a moderately tortured terroir  
to celebrate a Tuesday or Thursday  
in autumn—  
a glass for me,  
a glass for you,  
one for our health—  
then we'll see how things turn out?

A gang of crows working late,  
scavenges the bread crusts  
of the poor . . .  
business as usual, they say,  
taking the opportunity  
to strafe my bench,  
mock my lack of style—  
the scuffed cowhide  
of my shoes, pant cuffs from the ’60s.  
Look, half my friends are dust—I’m going to worry about fashion?  
And considering the distances,  
the health hazards available on the air,  
chances are slim that  
I’ll see my comrades again,  
even those who, like me, are still vertical—if  
if a bit wobbly—and cautiously navigating  
the produce aisles,  
appraising Chilean pink ladies  
for bruises,  
ignoring green bananas

from Ecuador,  
a three-pack of endive staring out  
like bald  
Presocratic philosophers  
as I debate whether eating kale  
could make a difference at this point.  
Too late, I think,  
to worry . . . too late for the Inca,  
the last boat to Byzantium,  
for navigating the Horn of Despair . . .  
too late for the fallen republic  
of desire—probably, for the planet. . . .  
Just time enough for  
this bench, for shaking out crumbs  
from a Ziploc bag of chips  
tossed beside the bin  
so I can sustain my fellowship  
with the grackles and blackbirds  
dropping down from palms  
and fence posts  
on wind that's never going to catch up  
with the past . . .  
too late to worry about that.

I have half a sandwich in my coat  
from the other day—  
such is the bounty in the world.  
Chestnuts bloom pink and white  
for nothing, effortless in their splendor.  
A bright effervescence  
of a comet zooms by every decade or so—  
just bits and pieces  
shooting overhead as you walk around—  
in what looks,  
for all the world, like slow motion . . .  
each one awarded a name,

but who's kidding who—

none of us will be here to see or call out to them again. . . .

Evening stars arrive with their ironies, and  
anyone who looks closely can see

is still there, the missing cargo of details

our bones filling in the gaps, in no time. . . .

And my thrift-shop karma's expired,

the discards of the rich

have quit coming round—

last time through the nebula of racks,

I couldn't find a single shirt

that didn't crimp my shoulders,

come up short in the sleeves.

Never mind that I'm never going

back to Paris,

not going to get comfortable or anything close

to content here and now,

even if I manage a nap for half an hour

beneath the bare candelabra of a coral tree.

It's going to rain . . .

but not in southern California,

not on a Tuesday, or any other day

that finds me here

looking out to the islands that also

aren't going anywhere.

All I come up with is a little channel fog,

a light drizzle of speculation

obscuring the shore,

the empty plate

of possibilities. . . .