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After the Deluge and Weekend

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Alan Soldofsky

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.

Alan Soldofsky

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.