

*Five poems*

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With your mouth closed  
swallow though this rain  
is already rain and further on

—you have a taste for darkness  
fill your belly the way the Earth  
each night escapes as a small hole

clings to one hillside  
carried by another —you become  
its grave, eat without fingers

without knees or the headlong dive  
this dirt is used to, held down  
and looking for more rain

for shoreline starting out  
not yet a whisper, lost  
cleared away and for your lips.

\*

Breaking apart :this calendar  
half as if memory, half  
still exploding though the paint

reeks from weather vanes  
and rain, last seen  
mixed with snow

—without your glasses  
you can't make out if the wind  
will dry in time

and a second coat already warms  
the way you keep track  
by lifting rugs, tables, chairs

—you need the pieces :lids  
that will flare up  
shake off their cracks

with each brush then back  
till nothing ages  
even with the window open.

\*

You begin the way shorelines  
risk their life this close  
though after each funeral

you drown in the row by row  
where each photograph is overturned  
shaken loose from the family album

—her shoes seem pleased  
to be shoes, not walk anymore  
or store their darkness for later

—the family was always collecting  
wanted you to sit, not pose barefoot  
but there you are, even now

standing next to her, eye to eye  
without saying a word, would leave  
if you knew how to turn away

the blank page, solid black  
not a beach, not a breath, nothing  
that understands this emptiness.

\*

These bricks reheated  
remember circling up  
sifting the smoke

for smoke not yet stars  
still inside, terrified  
by its darkness —chimneys

know to focus the sky closer  
as the night that comes due  
blackens this hillside

already in place  
brought down from under  
no longer red —they aim

the way each shadow  
leans against your heart  
tries to warm itself

in grasses and your hands  
made bigger, so slowly  
nothing can save you.

\*

Slowly you have forgotten how  
and after each rain reach out  
as if this folding ladder

once skimmed the rooftops  
was taught to trust the sky  
though rung by rung

you no longer lead the dead  
to the dead trapped above you  
and what passes for rescue

never leaves the ground  
or backs away, shaky, not sure  
what headwinds do or don't

—you have forgotten how to fly  
want to be lifted, lifted again  
as seasons and afterward

and hand over hand return  
with the blue-grey flight path  
covered with dirt and later.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *Almost Rain* (River Otter Press, 2013). For more information, including free e-books and his essay “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities,” please visit [simonperchik.com](http://simonperchik.com).