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Monday, The First Hour

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MONDAY, THE FIRST HOUR

I've been up an hour, startled awake by a nightmare
of home, Garrison and Coon laughing at jokes
as though I weren't there in the roadhouse,
marking well your accurate moves on the dance floor,
agile in stammering light. Without seeing,
I snapped open my eyes, felt cornered and reached
for your hand. Every moment passes before I get
a chance to say what happened. Last winter
I watched the cold cloud of our breath rhythmically ice
the window. I curled in your heat, believing.
There have been days when I could scream the dim sky
to morning and rattle our silent house
awake at dawn. I have this vision of a man
who can only remember. He eats. He talks
and figures. People think he's normal.
He expects a man should be happy
with a handful of rain, a voice calling out
the location of broken loves. You couldn't know.
I set my feet on the floor and feel the chill wood.
Spring. Rainbows upriver before long. Fat, they'll lay
on that granite shelf at the Rattlesnake's mouth
and wait for floods to swim farther upstream,
hunting deep holes and snags. I've watched them snap
the calm surface after May flies at first light.
Dew dried slowly on bear grass. Isn't something
too embalmed, too perfect about that scene?
Air photo-sharp. Fish biting. Water clean.
Didn't we swim there once? Or was that in a lake,
where moon warmed our backs, legs lost
in the dark water, feet buried deep in mud.
That was the night they caught Richard Speck,
killer of nurses. We were afraid and kissed.

—for Gayle