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## The Dense Color of the Biologist's Room

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## THE DENSE COLOR OF THE BIOLOGIST'S ROOM

I've spent years collecting anecdotes  
of natural separation—  
tales of salmon on a last run upriver,  
the mating dance of stoneflies, the quiet  
thrashing of bees.

What a waste of time. These rooms  
empty like abandoned mirrors.  
I spend whole afternoons watching winter:  
the yard outside my window littered  
with papery leaves, the spare lines  
of church steeples and damp alleys  
where dogs turn against the wind.  
This year I feel a primitive comfort  
in bare trees, like a ragged,  
one-eyed crow.

It does not matter that light fails  
early this far north.  
It does not matter that wind mutters  
in the stairwell like a familiar voice.  
All I need is in a drop  
of pond water under this lens,  
all the basic arrangements  
of predator and prey.

I sit at my desk keeping careful notes,  
accumulating data, writing words that always  
mean *lamp, letter, autumn and dust.*