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## Four Letters from the End of Summer

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## FOUR LETTERS FROM THE END OF SUMMER

1.

That day I broke my camp  
under Crooked Mountain, started walking  
south up Birch Creek. Windy all night,  
still blowing over wolf willow  
on the clear morning of your birthday.  
August first and I wanted  
some other word for year, some long sound  
about the way quick leaves throw light,  
fade out with knapweed in the yellow dust.  
A moan for ice, old drum for snow,  
and whitewater yell of spring  
returning into blood.

2.

I can see the Sweetgrass Hills  
from here, the glowing place  
where dawn has gathered cloud  
like a hand does cloth.  
Couldn't sleep, hard ground  
told nothing but an endless  
hunger, a long tunnel  
of days and moons carved out  
beyond my lifetime.  
Red stems of aspen mourn  
the short season,  
the hard winter to come.

3.

Our friend wanted to call  
jackspine a wisdom tree.  
He ought to know better.  
Clinging to rock  
against a steady wind  
won't make you wise,

just grey and lonely  
in a twisted shape.

4.

The August moon sticks  
behind Mount Jumbo. It rises late  
and cold over the black hill.  
You know I fumble my words.  
I've tried letters, the telephone,  
but it's no good. They won't carry  
what I feel across Wyoming.  
My verses used to be wild  
about the moon and you.  
Tonight, chainsaws cut past dark,  
each car driving by  
sounds like someone's lover  
leaving for good.