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It is too late, or I am too tired, again

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IT IS TOO LATE, OR I AM TOO TIRED, AGAIN

It is too late, or I am too tired, again, to write a poem
but all day long out driving in my truck I watched
for things that might make a poem

I saw
a long line of cars with headlights on

drove more
saw
a dead robin, *turdus migratorius*
on its back on the pavement by the cemetery
not long after the long line of cars were through
but I said to myself, no,
that's not it

ran into a bird
and I wasn't even going fast
then another
thump! right after the first one
and I said no, that's not it
that is not the poem

then later I was not watching well enough
daydreaming, who knows about what
some junk, some worthless crap from my life
when a boy only a few years younger than my boy
only a little older than my girl
raced out on a tricycle beside me
but he turned,
he saved himself, I did not do it
if it had been up to me in that instance
I would have killed him
and I was only going 5 or 8 miles an hour
but I said no
that's not it either

but I kept watching and working
it was over a hundred today
and I saw a garter snake in the road
do a 180 degree turnaround in the air
when it sensed my coming
and I saw several bullsnakes
at different times

I think I missed them

I saw a late newborn black angus calf still in its sheath
lying in the back of a red pickup, the calf-puller lying beside it
the rancher said it just took too long
while the dogs sniffed at the animal smell
and I said no, that's not it

the work day went by routinely
a few little screw-ups, nothing major
Steve happened by the house just as I was leaving from lunch break at

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and took the rest of my resi's
since he was almost out of work
and I had a solid four hours left
that was unusual for him to catch me at home
but I said no, that's not it
that's not the poem either
even though he took an hour's worth of work off me
and I'll get off early for once
(but when I got back to the center
I had to work another hour and a half
because Loren's on vacation
so Karen needs help on the night side
but I said no, that's not it either)

and sometime during the day as I was turning a corner
a butterfly flew into the cab
through the open right door
and flew across the cab in front of me
and out of the door on my side
it scared hell out of me
I first saw it in my peripheral vision
I thought it was a car
then when I realized it wasn't a car
I thought it was a bee or wasp
which I am allergic to and wary of
but it was neither and I felt kind of glad
that a butterfly flew through my car and was alive
and that I wasn't having an accident or getting stung
but I said no, that not it

and later I saw a ground squirrel dart across the road
like the afterthought of movement
and at one ranch a dragonfly
flew into the cab and looked around
and flew out (I remembered then a couple of days ago
when Mark told me he saw a dragonfly in the garden
and was so excited he made a simile: they have eyes like pilot's
glasses!)
but I said no, that's not it either

but I finally got off work and came home and hoed the beans
and gave up looking anymore
while I went and bought some beer
and came back home and started this
so Debbie and the kids came home right in the middle of it
and I said no, that's not it

and I laid on my side on the floor for a while, later,
my eyes closed resting in the dark,
thinking about what I had written
what I was trying to write

I remembered how the wind began to blow furiously
raising the dust up on the road like ghosts
I drove through, (I couldn't see so well)
but I drove through the clouds of dirt anyway, ancient stuff,
like driving through the pervasive dead
but I said no, no,
leave me alone, that's not it

lying on the floor, half asleep, drunk, exhausted,
my heart hammering at my ribs its unhealthy beer-sugar high
and I said no, that's not it

Mark can't sleep, he's on the couch
(he's taken to sleeping there lately)
he says daddy I'm scared I'm scared
so I hug him, I kiss him, tell him how much we love him,
still he says I'm scared I'm scared
so I lie to him there is nothing to be scared about