

Wonderments

by [Peter Cooley](#) in the [January 2024](#) issue

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Our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration.

—Sir Thomas Browne,

Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial

A day of quiet wonder in my hands
holding nothing but bewilderment
at the green world knocking on my window—
I am alive! fresh from harrowing
my address book, a kind of columbarium
page-after-page, of the too-soon-
too-many-dead. Bob, heart attack,
at fifty-five, Amelia, throat cancer, sixty,
Jane, double-vaccinated, Covid, seventy,
all of them here, then a moment, suddenly—

suddenly, even the long death of my mother
I watched, while I sat beside her
weeks, with the hospice nurse, dazed,
then suddenly, her eyes glazed over,
a yellow glare of translucent cellophane
all her gaze, transfixed on mine
as if she'd seen enough of me for a while—

In a minute now I will go out
into the terrible gift of the sun
just one of my unaccountable, unasked for—

If I disbelieved in coincidence,
which I do not, I might think it coincidental,
not heaven-sent that this is the first
day of Spring and this afternoon
I will need to buy a new, gold-embossed
leather-bound address book,
if they still sell such antiquities,
one which will outlast my being here.

In the life to come, I believe
I will look back on this, look down on this,
wondering while I was here
how long I thought I might need
that address book, its inchoate,
un-fingered, immaculate, sheer white pages—