

Wonderments

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

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 fors—

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—