

TOM WAYMAN
MEADOW

This field
high above the river
—stalks of grasses glittering
as sun reflects from dew—is where
Dennis Wheeler has lived
since his death at 30: not in his distant city
where he is buried
but decades older now, perhaps with children
of his own, who by this time will be
grown themselves,
graduated from college or nearly.

Here are the jobs he worked at
all these empty years; his hair
must be grey now
like ours. What was the texture of
the time he spent in this clearing
in the mountains, of his days
apart from us:
his decisions, purchases,
lovers, other people close to him
we never met
as he has lived his death
in this beautiful meadow
under the peaks, the water
far below?

A MUSIC

1.

A music
sounded through the valley

one evening in late summer
Drums of course

and the journey of a flute
climbing and descending a path

into these mountains
companied by the vibration

of electrified strings: sequences of
chords and single tones

that wavered between silences
—tree frogs summoning the darkness

2.

The music
was lovely

but night here is prowled by wood rat
and not love, by snake, a sudden scudding of deer

amid skunk stink, the dread of
bear: spikes of menace

formed of black air
left when the moon sets

—air in which the invisible road
pushes past cottonwood, aspen, vine maple

3.

To restore the ordinary night, I
steered my house across the valley

With only the building's running lights on
I kept the small blaze of sound astern

until at the base of the western ridge
I anchored where firs, pines and cedars

shadowed a dark shoreline
Around my dwelling I set out my lawns

and secured them to fencing, deck stairs and doorway
While ripples of distant melody

nudged at the hull of the vessel
my beds of delphinium, columbine, strawflower

stood watch through the mute bells
that mark the hours

And when the east at last brightened
the waters stilled

Now I could see that the music
had brought me to moor in the hum audible

at the core of quiet
as though in the black fires on the face of the sun

or amid a new weather
Surrounded by all I was used to

I had reached a country
strange to me as my life

“I MIGHT NOT, MIGHT NOT FEEL THIS GOOD AGAIN”

Phoebe Snow (1950–2011)

A note, purer
 than candlelight

formed from a person’s
 skill, not a machine

product:
 white haze

of a fine fall of snow
 against the distant cedar’s, fir’s

dark green, branch tips
 fringed in white

The sound
 ageless, like light

—young when released, when the chords
 began travelling

and thereafter no older:
 the light, streaking toward me

from a star’s cauldron,
 unsullied, unchanged

while its maker,
 infinitely far in time,

sickens, exhausted,
 bloats, hemorrhages,

 collapses

The sung tone,

a wave, a stream of
moments,

proceeds across that echoing gulf,
vibrating with

the sad courage
of being born