“Self-Portrait as Shards of Mirror”

You're the handful of reasons I know and won't say. the questions I've refused to ask: a telephone ringing in an empty apartment whose door's been left unlocked, an opened letter face-up on the desk. Your hand examines and rejects a city subtracted to snow inside a glass sphere. Who wrote the book of promises from which we took turns reading aloud, the primer without a present tense? By then you were asleep: and woke in time to watch the illuminated numerals of an electric clock turn like a page, remembering the title of that unfinished book. (Someone on a late-night radio was singing something I couldn't quite catch, snatches of someone's confidences.) Looking back in something less than sorrow on the captivated hours, we smile about the riddles on the bottle tops, and the papier-mâché clues we confidently buried. How ironic we make ourselves seem. Whole nights spent that way: talking at the same end of an unmade bed, sending each other home to a vacant lot with a bus stop to light the way, pockets lined with exact change. Memory, we grow too much alike, turning the same corner at four A. M., turning back the same sheets across half a city, where your hands mean more than promises, a simple household task.

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