

Dear Death

Cool cloak. So goth. I dig how the pleats
ripple like pond water when you move,
and the hood shadows the absence of your face.
Sweet scythe, too. The craftsmanship
of the wooden handle, how smooth the slow
curve. I had to look it up—it's called
the *snath* (rhymes with wrath), or *snathe*
(rhymes with bathe). I prefer the latter, the long
a. Snath sounds like an infectious disease
I might've caught if my mother wasn't there
to steer me from the gutter, from large
puddles marbled green, mosquitoes
scribbling above. How many times
do mosquitoes do your dirty work anyway?
Versus fleas? Versus gunpowder?
How bone-tired were you in Tōhoku?
The previous year in Haiti? Have you ever felt
the sepia wind of remorse? I have 77 more
questions for you, give or take, you're often
in my thoughts. Yesterday, while grinding
coffee beans. While cleaning the lint trap.
Dicing cilantro. Buying ink cartridges.
Clipping my beard. I could go on and on,
you're that legendary in my head.
It works this way: I'm running the knife
across the cutting board, the cilantro
breaks into confetti, I remember my mother
scattering the herb over a Chilean dish, then
her voice on Monday, "numbness in my leg,"
"congestive heart failure," and it fails,

my mind fast-forwards to when it fails,
I can't help it, you grip her IV'd hand, pull her
over, and it is done, her silence begins
blowing through in waves, icing the room—
the thought seized me so completely, the knife
hovered still above the wooden board.
Seriously though, cool cloak. Sick black
fabric. I heard if you turn it inside out,
the whole world's embroidered on the lining.

Figures

The math. He calculated
at his desk, in November's chrome light
slanting through his office window: taxes paid
against the price of one Reaper drone
divided by federal budget.

He found the numbers online,
photos of the aircraft, its fuselage
narrow and windowless, a bone
sheared lengthwise. Then a video:

five in the crosshairs.

Infrared will make anything carrying heat
black. He thought, *five black seeds*
slipping along the dirt trail.
It made watching easier. One walked ahead
or four lagged behind, one

smaller than the rest, which he wished
he hadn't noticed. The explosion
looked like a black bouquet falling away
down the center of his monitor.

Black bouquet too, he thought.

If I tell myself it was just four cents,
I miscalculated, it was three, if I tell myself
my pennies went to another drone,
I chipped in for flight, not flame.
The light beside him brightened

and he gave his eyes to the window, the wind
behind the window, the wind diving
across the street, shaking up the neighbor's oak.
The leaves. He could not stop

witnessing their letting go.

As the History Teacher Lectures on World War I

One student hears “mustard gas” and wonders
if the air smelled like French’s or Grey Poupon.
One chews his pencil like a chicken bone.
One executes a stickman in the margins.
Under the blond awning of bangs, one writes
in pink ink a love note to the quarterback.
One is stoned. One sniffs Wite-Out
until his desk ripples. One lifts the trapdoor
of a scab and licks his wound like a postage stamp.
One fidgets in his sleep as if rodents
tread over his flesh. One folds and folds
a sheet of paper until it flies. With spit wads,
one gives pimples to the blackboard.
*We must learn from history or be doomed
to repeat it*, the teacher says. One hears
the clock biting its fingernails beside the flag.