

# C O M E S T H E R E C K O N I N G



B R U C E B E A S L E Y

*after the feast comes the reckoning* – proverb

Now comes the reckoning. Comes the flame.  
Old wineskins still hold their slosh.  
Barbpoints of fenceslats, pickets: that's *the pale*; I would not counsel  
going beyond. It's enough here. Each step away  
squeezes a little more of the green out of things,  
off of lawns. What use so many blessings if we  
must spend all our days  
counting and reckoning, reckoning  
and counting them up? Pearls  
in the trough, in the slop, caught  
in the fleshy pink nostrils of swine: waste  
not. There's an *eve* – have you seen it – swaddled  
inside *never*, warning-time of the coming-  
at-dawn of what travels here so fast, the ill  
and pestilential wind. But we can go backwards, it's better so, so  
late's earlier than early, and the eve comes after its feast-day.  
Sometimes the subject goes away when you say it. It goes  
with the saying. I did just as my mother said. Watched  
her say just what she did  
not do. But her doing, her vodka-guzzling, to speak of it  
was to go with her going. I did not say what she did  
and saw her never again. Enough said. Any  
enough is too much with what can be made  
into a noose. Just a few inches of old raveled rope in the backyard  
and before you know it some legs will kick and swing.  
Gone is as gone does. Enough is enough of a feast? Tell that  
to the twice-lightning-stricken. Still comes the reckoning,  
still comes the flame. The scars

burns leave on water  
are known as sizzle and steam. Twice-shy. The truth will *out*  
like the drenched fire, hide itself  
as flame does deep in a woodcoal, but the water keeps something  
cinderblack it won't ever get rid of.  
Every question's two-sided, like a fence:  
picket-snaggled, built-to-obscure. The out  
side's the straggling answer, the devil-  
taken hindmost: unhomely, uneasily  
beyond the pale. Every day inside we set the table for enough  
and make of it a feast, call the moments  
cast pearls. But still comes not-yet. Meet it halfway  
on the road out of here where trouble always approaches, deep  
in the refulgent, eye-burning greenness of the other side.  
Just east of east, where west already lies  
when you look back  
and let the bygones surrender themselves and be  
what they always meant to be: vanished or vanishing,  
like the pale pearlgray ashclumps that last night were whitehot  
wormholes through coal. The present's not  
a time; it's no place, like a home, like our stone-  
pummeled glass house, the browning  
jewelweed-grass smearing its way up the panes.  
The present's the hectic leap  
of fleas without their dog. Nips at nothing.  
It's soon, now. It will soon be now. The reckoning will come  
later, as late as never. But for now the tense stays present  
like a hummingbird caught in your hand, nectar-tongued,  
its heartbeat splintering each second into twentieths.  
Now is the time. Here is the set lawn. The pales aim their spiked  
pickets over our paling-out and lushly-only green.