

## Kevin

Though protocols forbid it,  
the predawn hours jockey.

Key tessellations on the disco ball  
suddenly flip over like a giant face of Mao

spelled backwards.

I need a few minutes to withdraw

into my private security detail  
(negative impact for the Oak Room).

It'll be hard to get Venice Beach  
into the chifferobe.

Tassels on a signature headpiece  
loosely pend. I say let them.

They'll pillow the blows, right?  
Then plow diamonds

back into the soil?

That's what it says in this brochure.

# Del

Grind mood into key, unlock  
spatial extension. It's  
a Warring States period

in Unity Village.  
Noise floor tilts into loam,  
tracer angles spot weird voids

deep in their preparations.  
If Coach's heart rate climbs much further,  
we'll have to repaint the ceiling.

Had enough for today?  
Now improve the abacus.  
Trusses still litter the yard, theoretically.

Call me your despot  
so I can qualify for funding.  
I have the story of the Cleveland

Gracchi in my bones. Their kind  
doesn't come this way often, you know,  
though they bring new helmet forms

and harsh ways with a dog.  
The idea was for them to link the ape  
to a reveal downstairs

through an "efflux of time."  
Too bad Moses got involved.  
He's like a raja's palace, that one.

# Dave

Glyphs chiseled into my need to know  
conjugate the adjacent desert  
like a hinge on the door into a waterfall

while a millennial rime of oaths  
flashes below the rim  
and the dark chord turns away.

Though fire shall pour from the locks in its mouth,  
in the larger scheme,  
blinking with a fierceness

adopted from your expired samples,  
I dovetail into the thing you've become.  
For nil is the auctioneer's chant

issuing from speakers at an undeclared circumference.  
And in calling it to accounts, our lives,  
as the air it perturbs, tear open a new harbor.

Hence walls, disappearing bookcases,  
the carboy filled with a volatile liquid,  
night glowing with the albedo of swans in congress.

Someone's hands roll a carpet down from the elevated  
and blood-red lake, but the hand without a master  
disassembles the breathing weapon.

## The Ossification of Cartilage

"Hey boy, do want to see a bone?" an elderly man asked. The boy didn't answer, but the man, unbidden, pulled an object out of his coat pocket and palming it asked the boy again if he wanted to see a bone. "I guess," the boy said. The man opened his palm. He was holding what appeared to be the skull of a rabbit. He handed it carefully over to the boy, who cradled it in his two hands. A couple in a Studebaker Lark looked at the two of them quizzically as they drove past. The skull, in fact, was carved from very light wood with a low, nearly imperceptible grain, yet it was hollow, and matched perfectly, feature for feature, a real rabbit's skull. The boy knew enough to marvel at the craftsmanship, but he thought it a rather strange thing for someone with such skill to execute. "This isn't a bone," the boy said. "How do you know?" the man asked him. "Have you ever seen your bones?" The boy told him he had seen other animal bones and that this was a carving out of wood. He turned it over and with one eye shut looked up inside the skull. A swastika composed of miniscule prismatic hemispheres of glass was affixed along the interior surface of the crown. When he turned the skull slightly, various of the beads caught the lowering sun and flashed colored patterns along the temporal areas. The boy didn't know the significance of the swastika. "I live over there," the man told him, pointing toward the nursing home down the street. "Their treasonous acts against me make a ladder for me to climb right out of the window when they're not looking, the fuckers." The boy handed the skull back over to him quickly. His parents weren't home; he was afraid the man might follow him into the house. He looked around to see if anyone else was coming up the street. "Did you carve that yourself?" he asked with eyes cast deliberately downward. The man repocketed the skull and picked up a horse chestnut near his foot. A brown crescent was visible beneath the cracked seam of its husk. The man put the nut up above his nose with the crescent of brown facing out like a cat's eye and poked his head forward in the boy's direction. "You can't see 'em, but I can," he said. "I'm looking straight in at your little-boy bones." "Okay, thanks. I've got to go in for supper now," the boy told the man, and he

walked quickly up the stone stairs toward the house. Only when he was at the foot of the porch did he dare turn around. The man was still standing in the same place, holding the chestnut above his nose. He was whistling the melody to "Speak Low" and waved to the boy with his free hand. Once the boy was inside the house he edged toward a window and peeked out. It was growing dark. Still the man remained, though he had lowered down to his side the hand holding the chestnut. The boy was reasonably sure the man could not see him, so he was determined to watch at the window until he walked away. The boy kept looking even though he could no longer see whether the man was there or not. For more than an hour after the sun set he crouched at sill-level looking out the window, thinking at one moment that he could see the man, at another that he couldn't. He thought he might build a small shelter there under the window where he could store things and rest comfortably between vigils. But once it occurred to him that his head could be considered a shelter inside the shelter he built under the window, which would be inside the house, which was inside the outside where the man was standing, to be inside no longer afforded him any safety. He was more vulnerable than food — he himself was a form of thinking food. So long as someone was trying to eat him, he would know he was alive. The air became hunger itself.