

The Work of Constant Rising

by Philip F. Clark

When did the air become warning?
That clairvoyant delft and Delphic sky.
What strange and ardent premonition
held sway? Where were we going
before this hard work of constant falling?
We were catching cabs and making breakfast,
ironing, cursing late trains; hoping the
deal would go through, the bank would
allow the loan. Making sure the kids
would get to school on time.

The city was resplendent, as it is
on certain days, and on this particular
one, the tourists and the natives, jostled
side by side, proud of something innate
about New York — its vivid shine.

Everything was glass and blue.
The blue we would name so many ways,
in ways we never could before. Stark
beauty some call it. But something else:
a majesty of sorts. The city at its prime.

"I'll be home by five,"
"Remember to pick up my shirts from the cleaners,"
"Perhaps we can go there tomorrow,"
"I'll see you later."

The conversations of the calm and mundane.

Something faltered. The cab stopped.
A light changed; a head
was turned, about to answer a question; some

laughter had been shared;
I was about to teach a class.

A blackened sad confetti fell.
Go up, go down. A wind of lives.
Clothing in strange places. Places
changed. Tumult in the act of
taking pictures. Thousands at one time.

Absence and reflection — the coin's reverse
of presence and forgetting.. This is the work
of constant rising: the falling of kisses
on lips before the world
became a flash of light.

This was before the wrangling of
landscape architects, the yeas and nays
of memorial ideas, before the
souvenirs: coasters and photographs,
books, hand-written notes, tiles on a fence.

And now is the work of constant rising:
the work of belief, and purpose; the
going up, and forward, the proof of labor,
the stone, metal, and glass, mirrors;
the proof of time.

We are here.

The poet said, 'I feel the fell of dark, not day.'
but day it always is. Bright! Bright!
the city claims its blue salutes; its stopping in
mid-sentence at a name where fingers roam a stone.

