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Maybe So

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MAYBE SO

We have a little time here
 and are so small it can seem endless.
 We begin by seeing the light, which is too bright,
 and end in seeing it go too dim. Between,
 —well, between we have jobs and babies,
 opinions, loads of opinions. We have friends,
 lovers, and we learn how little our opinions mean
 because of them. We discover fear
 and take years to grow intrigued by it,
 find out how live we are on the edge of the bridge.
 We discover love and recognize it as fear.
 Between, we ask what the agenda is.
 The agenda is the end. Never mind. And the light,
 every day from its beginning and ours, sometimes more
 and sometimes less, comes back to begin us over.
 Just when we think we knew the front yard's routine
 arrives the cardinal, two, the bright tangerine of her beak
 the only thing in the world her wide eyes can't see,
 the pick of his pert chirp slung over and over
 at the rock-face of the morning, that blank chert
 he exposes garnets in. We shake our heads
 and go off to work, because work is what we do,
 and that is its definition. You know this.
 I know that. We have a little time here. We stockpile
 batteries and pens, saxophone reeds for some,
 for others sheep—it's all to the good.
 They tell us it won't count. We know
 what counts. Maybe it's even
 because of all we've done
 that a kiss comes in the middle of an afternoon,
 not a new kiss if that means new lips,
 new shoulders rounded into our awkward arms,
 but still: a kiss that stops time for us, stops us
 short on the bridge as if it had got rid
 finally of its end and its beginning.
 We remember that. Even at the end,
 we remember that beginning, when the light
 looked over our shoulder
 and made us memorize every leaf, every feather,
 every fear we came to love with, and the love.

