

Directions for the Day · Robert Sims Reid

August and early gloom,
neon haze from the grocery
on Higgins. My bedroom wall
watches back, three prints
made by an unknown girl
whose hands knew elephant,
giraffe and bear.
For directions, try green,
color of broken fields,
color of her eyes
when they glanced up
into the 9:15 out of Butte.
Perhaps when that light
touched her hair the final time
it spelled *because*.
The ambulance bill came.
I sent it back,
and, for a moment,
her animals looked afraid.
Then, the giraffe leaned
on the paper tree. Her elephant
sank back into his river.
I saw the bear fade
into a black wood of drawn color.

Far to the east
I imagine New York,
Hudson turning yellow in shadow
of brick and steel.
Three clowns on the lamb
mumble about Big Tony.
In that life
I won't fret over dead farms.
I won't think easy for Donna
climbing the walls in Illinois,
her husband five months
in the basement with no name.
Tweetie should have gone out
better than a Labor Day crash,
the men who dug those babies
from his bumper

could have cried more,
though never enough to hold
the sky in place. I confess
the world has little care
for sweethearts groping air
on a blank road.
It's true, on the seventh day
God rested. Maybe
He threw up His hands
and quit, maybe the claymores
gashed His heart
another day, when Bruce
lay down to die.
One time in a mirror
I looked old, crow's feet
fake when I squint
at the marbled glass.
Other than the prints, she left
a box of beads, a book of Yeats.
My crime to speak in a trumped-up way
about the dead, the wind
we hold in our hands and bless.