How Strange the Words Sound after She's Gone ·
Jim Gauer

To be perfectly honest I awoke this morning thinking
About cows, about the word *cows,* a thought that it seems
Was already hungry, though at the same time content
To follow itself around in a neat little pasture
For most of the morning, contemplating the grass
On a non-existent hill.
Or maybe I awoke with a new way of thinking
About *elm trees,* that's what it was, I remember the thought
Seemed to think it could feel its own shadow
Growing thinner, it already seemed to feel it was
The shadow of what it was.
I awoke this morning beyond a doubt in the shadow
Of what was, and to be candid about it began to consider
How narrow the road is, my fast-moving thought about prepositions
That stands watching its own path curve away
going over a hilltop, leaving me
Where we were, in a strange rolling countryside
That has lost all capacity to think
Its way *out.*

Frankly, until this morning, I had not seen
Cows and elm trees get lost here, wandering stupidly
In my words for them until they wound up
In my words for them, with no way out.
Until this morning, when she left me, I had never seen
How empty *our house* looks as the words for a thought
That left me, a thought that left behind it
Only the perfect words for it, as empty as these rooms.
This morning, in fact, I woke up empty, with just the words
She left me, with just those words, and a thought
About vacant houses that seemed to see
Only its own reflection as it stood in the yard
With the last of the elm trees, hoping for one last look
Through the window of its words.

What I am trying to say is that I awoke this morning
Trying as strange as it sounds to say
How strange the words sound as I try
To say them, as I try to say

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How strange the words sound and that's just
What I say. So many empty words!
This morning I woke up in one room of a house filled
With words, filled with the word *words,* my small vocabulary
In a strange new language, a language that is itself
A large empty house to which, in all honesty,
I am slowly adding rooms.