

I think that you are going to be a fine cartographer,
how else could we have found you in each other?

Last night, he taught me, your almost-father,
if I tie a string to Orion's right shoulder

and follow to its end in the steady wind that rises
when the stars put on their names and sweep forward to be counted,

I will see an eddy of snow, a faint balloon.
I think it is the galaxy

where certain children go
to live out their first lives;

it's full of smaller pinwheels and a sweet wind
to wheel them so the ones who have no lungs

can use instead the breath of the world—
the big world, the forgiving one.

QUINTET FOR FLUTE AND STRINGS

For years I've been sad
over somebody you didn't know,
somebody who walked the earth
while you did, but so what. Today
you gave me a little piece of music
you have written for the flute—
the flute I learned to play
so long before the angel
was given his assignment
to come down and uproot
the garden of my heart—
and when I looked at it I saw

how you'd plowed the staves' furrows
and unearthed the gleaming notes
from the sky where it is blackest
(as, after someone's taken there
they close the sky behind him
and keep it locked awhile
until they know he sees
by the faint watts of his body
and won't go grabbing
the stars from their sockets);
when we played it I heard
a voice as through a door ajar
that kept on not listening
to anything it meant in me,
kept speaking in the soft voice
I think God will use
to ask all the faces
to lay down their tears
and wash the charred world
— and then everything sighed:
the chair first, offering
its sturdy wood, the four
bowing arms it had rested on so long;
then the body, so amazed
to be hearing that sound
that it rose from the chair
where its life had been passing
and asked itself to dance, please, asked what
finally woke you, what woke you up
so pretty, what star gave you the money
for such a silver gown?