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Prison Guard

When you come to work  
tomorrow,  
when you return from earth  
tomorrow,  
you will lose another fragment  
of your body's Name  
somewhere in this Dickensian wilderness.  
Never matters for the bright outside,  
the staggered stones surrounding us  
bleach out whole magentas, stolen,  
from the sanctity of our brains.  
I used to dream in excited, new hues:  
exemplary yellows, cloudscraper blues,  
an atypical orange— an oriole that lifts  
and steeples her wings to pray,  
now every dream is a tattered  
sepia-faded photograph.

You may not think that this matters,  
but your Name is  
slowly eroding,  
although, I am just a Number,  
I know, intimately, of Name erosion  
and how it tricks the neurochemicals  
into panic-fights for air, love,  
soft basic breads.  
Working overtime on your mind  
because you've pulled another shift  
and the Captured shifts onto  
you. And all your wooed naked hues  
are washed away,  
as if by the plundering of storms  
that come to break the body  
of the maple, straight through the grain.

I know  
and I know  
this is not what you wanted,  
this is neither a house  
nor a small living thing  
that could exist within the  
checkerberried meadows of your Name,  
and yet, still, the stones  
compel you to obscure the underbelly  
from the small stuttered lights  
of the broken.