

Then

Then, after waking from a short sleep and truly not knowing what should be thought or said or done today, by myself or the next guy, by my folks or by Laura, who most often sublets my soul, by our Reeve, by any stranger who also considers me a stranger, by you, or by God our witness, not knowing because Time doesn't translate to television or transcontinental flights or the Big Bang, not wishing to spread hope across the globe through inoculation or word of mouth or as prizes in colored cereal but through the slightest bending of one knuckle on one finger on every hand in the world, understanding that where there is paralysis a swallow would do and where there is death a shifting of molecules, not comprehending the quantity of suffering on Earth or the quality of selfishness in my voice, not caring sufficiently about yesterday to sift through its clutter for clues about tomorrow, not willing to speculate about what might be obvious, I suspect, with the regret of one who holds failure above calculation, wonder above sensuality, trust above justice, that we ought, all of us, every human gone or coming or now, to not only stop seeking answers to our questions but stop asking them altogether and try listening for one outside ourselves, not in the ether or in the spheres, not in the wilderness or in the limelight, not in what is ancient or what is cutting edge, not in the palm of God, but in the spaces between ourselves, the distance we place between our intents, our disbeliefs, our notions of this business of living, and upon hearing that question, the one we suppose won't resound but will nevertheless rattle our ribs like solitary desire, like stuttering need,

we must respond to it with a frankness no round table discussion has yet heard, with a simple nodding of acquiescence as to our places of repose and reckoning; then, I got up out of my chair, put on my bent cap and my jacket that smells of me, let the door slip so it slammed slightly with my passing, crossed the wet lawn shut off from the early morning sunlight by a church roof and found the strip of pavement that would take me to the busy coffee shop, where the motions of spooning sugar or reaching to the floor for a blown napkin or squinted eyes shifting to the clock above the counter might shake my spirit into the willing wait.

Tim Ramick