

*Mark Wagenaar*

## RELIC

A strand of dark hair, invisible against the early evening's dark,  
descends into the town's tesseral streets,  
descends like a microphone to the stage

of our lives,  
into an evening already given over to the shades.

And if it reaches your shoulder as you hurry home,  
if it tangles in your hair,  
so you lie awake at night  
& dream the points of light you would stitch together

into the loved ones you lost,  
who could blame you  
for keeping the strand close for a few extra nights?

And if you wake to framed pictures of strangers on the walls of your house,  
who would not call you sister, or brother?

It was only a break in the pattern,  
like the broken tile that keeps the mosaic from repeating itself endlessly,  
keeps it from approaching the infinite, or the divine, whatever name

we give to what is unapproachable.  
Yet here an absence turned to nothing before your eyes,

& this fuse of days, this reliquary,  
carries every touch & sorrow of another, & has enough DNA

to recreate the face, with the right computer & 3-D printer,  
of the one who lost the strand—

& you, who walked the streets today  
with all the answers written on your hand,

with all the confidence of a flimflam artist,

if even an absence can turn  
to nothing before your eyes

what will you say to the face rising  
from the waters?