

ROB COOK

## **THE ONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO GET HERE FROM HERE**

On a day too dark  
to be counted as part of a week,

I use hushed lunch soap  
to paste screams to the wall one by one.

The screams look like they always survived here.  
The screams look like dried moth latitudes.

The screams have hair and eyes  
but no lip-softened mouth

and they look like janitors  
mopping the mumbled halls

of toothpaste and deodorant pods.  
A man who loves his gun

and blares his gun and blames his gun  
ties the one I was to a tree.

The one I was when time still passed.  
The one I was when the sunlight was real

and I could hear the sound trees made  
clicking their locust teeth.

The one I still am repeats the name  
of a woman no one talks about anymore.

He doesn't ask who will clean  
the mess the clock made

on the wall that leads to the days  
behind him. He doesn't ask his money

to return when he places it  
in another person's hands.

And when a man visits  
with his guns, the one I still am takes

a scream down from its place and boils it  
with a rage of giggling vegetables.

He doesn't know who's boiling  
the clouds in the already forgotten

sky, but it's no reason to feel like he's failed,  
no reason to think he can't cook

for the man who treats his gun  
as a child. The screams taste

like something that slept  
in shades of orange.

The vegetables taste  
like something that sings

in decibels of descending wasps.  
Tied to a tree in a forest

without trees, the one I was begins  
to blacken into a curtain view.

(And once the one I was blackens  
into a curtain view,

that silence will replace everything.)  
And because he trusts the shadow-false

mushrooms softening the darkness  
where it's vulnerable,

the one I still am picks at the air  
to mute the wishes

of the gun planted here as a child  
when the mailbox shells

could be felt groping through  
the bone-chalked forest and every house

on a map of screams could be found,  
if not saved, by some blank thing that breathed.