

# The Work of Constant Rising

*by Philip F. Clark*

When did the air become warning?  
That clairvoyant delft and Delphic sky.  
What strange and ardent premonition  
held sway? Where were we going  
before this hard work of constant falling?  
We were catching cabs and making breakfast,  
ironing, cursing late trains; hoping the  
deal would go through, the bank would  
allow the loan. Making sure the kids  
would get to school on time.

The city was resplendent, as it is  
on certain days, and on this particular  
one, the tourists and the natives, jostled  
side by side, proud of something innate  
about New York — its vivid shine.

Everything was glass and blue.  
The blue we would name so many ways,  
in ways we never could before. Stark  
beauty some call it. But something else:  
a majesty of sorts. The city at its prime.

"I'll be home by five,"  
"Remember to pick up my shirts from the cleaners,"  
"Perhaps we can go there tomorrow,"  
"I'll see you later."

The conversations of the calm and mundane.

Something faltered. The cab stopped.  
A light changed; a head  
was turned, about to answer a question; some

laughter had been shared;  
I was about to teach a class.

A blackened sad confetti fell.  
Go up, go down. A wind of lives.  
Clothing in strange places. Places  
changed. Tumult in the act of  
taking pictures. Thousands at one time.

Absence and reflection — the coin's reverse  
of presence and forgetting.. This is the work  
of constant rising: the falling of kisses  
on lips before the world  
became a flash of light.

This was before the wrangling of  
landscape architects, the yeas and nays  
of memorial ideas, before the  
souvenirs: coasters and photographs,  
books, hand-written notes, tiles on a fence.

And now is the work of constant rising:  
the work of belief, and purpose; the  
going up, and forward, the proof of labor,  
the stone, metal, and glass, mirrors;  
the proof of time, above and below.

We are here.

The poet said, 'I feel the fell of dark, not day.'  
but day it always is. Bright! Bright!  
the city claims its blue salutes; its stopping in  
mid-sentence at a name where fingers roam a stone.

