

THE LIST

You learn penury as you progress,
the way your musculature expands
after months in the gym.

Remember the gym?

That chain of luxurious shrines
to your physique,
spilled across Manhattan
like a stack of chips
fallen to the felt of a poker table.

Now you hector your saints beneath your breath,
beg your razor to wait a bit longer for blades,
take glass cleaner to the sparse shelves of your refrigerator...

You have given up on whiter teeth,
dry cleaning,
the highest bidder,
a pair of shiny speakers
to bookend your laptop
like obedient robots.

The music is tinny, but hopeful.

On the back of the envelope
from which you've extracted
a late payment notice
from the electricity authority
you write a list –

the stinging bills,
the impossible debts,
all to be paid in some richer future,
where somewhere there is
a silver circus,
an airshow,

where the lacquered red wings of a biplane
flash beneath the bright summer sun
as they twist in a perfect spiral
across the hot blue sky.

What you'll love most, though,
what you'll remember,
is the sound of the engine,
glorious and undaunted,
burning all that fuel just for your delight.

You put it on the list.