

Stalked By an Orb You Barely Knew
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Your future stalker goes unannounced.
It lenses in—fisheye wide—
through a convex mirror found
at the thrift store where
you once recognized your own mouth
on the face of a mannequin.

He isn't a blaring alarm
but a blur in the security cam,
all a halo and heat signature,
a haunting in a bokeh:
a circle of light never quite focused
that always remains.

Austin, Nashville, Tempe,
he will again appear
in your artful photographed
round stones set on sidewalks,
in front of chalked outlines of moons
drawn by children you never met.

And how you worried, how you prayed,
even flipping a coin for an answer, but
he was not the coin-toss moment,
rather, the coin, spinning in air.
The vinyl that continues to turn
as the needle scrapes the label.

He's just nothing.
Someone who once almost loved you.
Whom a parapsychologist had no right to know.
He is a soft filter you mistook for warmth
but is actually just dust
annoying you

by leaving the scent
of your favorite perfume
found inside the hood
of your comfortable old sweatshirt,
cigarette burns shaped like planets fondly
reminisced, though the smell of smoke was gone.

This new orb
was the date with flint in his kiss,
not a chatting up rando at the bar tonight
who wanted your body more than your name.
No, this one is dead like a broken snow globe.
One you cannot shake, even to revive it.

“A carnival ride you cannot get off,”
you’ll write later, loving the thrill with
scraped knees circling pressed against,
unyielding metal. No one stopping the spin.
This ghost you thought you never wanted
in this moment will be strangely missed:

like a broken plate you always used,
a wine ring left on the book cover,
the fierce-shaped bruise left by
a seatbelt you didn’t expect to save you.
You’ll feel him: a soft blink
in your peripheral, wanting him

in the moon seen from the porch table,
glowing and rising slowly.
You’ll say, “He is a circle
that always would find me.”
And you’ll mean it like praise.
Like closure.