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Table of Contents

Flies.....	4
Ants.....	5
Moths.....	6
Spiders.....	7
Centipede.....	8
Mouse.....	9
Blue Jay.....	10
Bottle, Cotton Wool, & Formaldehyde.....	11
Thimble.....	12
Piece of String.....	13
Bunch of Keys.....	14
Pencil.....	15
Paper.....	16
Candle.....	17
Clock.....	18
Casket with Flowers.....	19

Flies

Black marks
left by the pen
used to sign death warrants.
Who am I kidding?
It's my grocery list
crossed out, rewritten, crossed out again
until it is covered
with them.

Ants

Much the same
without the wings.
The only visitor
I have had for days
prowling through the house
begging for crumbs.

Moths

Thousands of tiny curtains
opening and closing
at once.

Last descendants
of every peep show
on earth.

Spiders

The insides of an old crutch.

The greatest invention
of a troubled mind.

The children of the dust
come back
to argue their case.

Centipede

There may be a hundred,
I haven't bothered to count.
There may only be fifty-two.
One for every year
they have haunted me.

Mouse

Quiet. Keeps to himself.
My downstairs neighbor,
you would hardly know he's there
except those late nights
he taps on the ceiling
with his tiny broomstick.

Blue Jay

Sneak thief, bully, vandal, etc.
The list goes on and on.
His reputation is preceded
by the noise he makes.

Bottle, Cotton Wool, & Formaldehyde

Remind me again, in whose image
we are made? The brightly colored
specimens
neatly sorted, labeled
each with its own
white cardboard
name card. So lifelike,
except
for the shiny head of a pin.

Thimble

Tiny craters
like a map of the moon
borrowed from ancient astral travelers.
Mayan? Inca? Sumerian?
It doesn't matter. We have forgotten
how to read the charts
and must invent
new uses.

Piece of String

A snake
after the snake
has shed its skin.
The skin the snake
has shed.
A memento
of the guillotine.
A reminder
(finger missing).

Bunch of Keys

Chained together like prisoners
or climbers ascending Everest.
Communicants lined up
with hands raised and eyes shut
waiting for a door to open
with their name on it.

Pencil

Hard-bitten, he is
the eternal optimist:
writing his own epitaph
and then erasing it.

Paper

Field of snow? No. Darkness,
waiting for night
to sign his name.

Candle

Monument to the never
were, the wished for,
the could have been...
Faux white marble,
silver pedestal,
and the thread of smoke
our dreams, exhausted,
must climb.

Clock

I have nothing to say
at this time.
Later, I shall weep
at its harsh words.

Casket with Flowers

The smooth black lacquer surface
sets off the brightly colored flowers
so elegantly. You would hardly know
death is involved.

A boy squirms
in his shirt and tie
as if stuck to his seat
by a pin.