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for Enda and Freya, as always, and for Jack Wyley
**To Whom . . .**

Of course the skills may have vanished
or the language broken up, so many lumps
of indecipherable clay in the satellite library.

I stand here before you —
something; dust-messenger? Designated
sliver? Last person out, remember

the planet . . . I’m sorry,
the role was inexact determined,
in such haste assigned and after all

I hardly expected the responsibility.
Still, this is what you have; what, really,
you always get. Open the box

and out shambles a minor functionary
with his bag of beans. This is how
we counted, these were the names of the kings.

Study the spreadsheets. I put down
what I could, kept adding slides to the deck.
Not everything would play. The technology

is brilliant until it isn’t. Heat
the clay. Or not? Be patient.
This is us. We weren’t. Or not enough.

---

**The Messenger**

is always wrong have you noticed
I swear
I never touched the corpse I was nowhere near
I was watching the match in the security hut
then stopped off for shashlik
see the stain on my shirt
I almost didn’t come

anticipating just this reception
Still here I am
Someone snuck out
to do the deed you can be sure of it the footage
will bear me out

It’s all right for the dead
they have no appetite but a man even a messenger
even a bearer of unwelcome news

there was mist everywhere
I couldn’t see past my nose plus the stink
the stink of the corpse so naturally we retreated a little
The match was dull ninety minutes of ineptitude
extra time then penalties

it must have been then or thereabouts
though as soon as the mist cleared we saw the damage
had been done
someone not me not any of us
had moved the corpse
someone is always moving the corpses
An Afterlife

The wind whistles in the moorland,
the wind whistles in the fen.
The moon wakes up in our language,
then slips back to sleep again.

Correspondence

Your faxes have faded but the waterfall
is wholly legible, the water
still flails the granite like a horse’s tail.

The mosses and ferns are printed in the mist
and whatever we said is in there now,
the droplets fall on my skin, particles
charge the air and far off
the old machines come to life again
shaking hands across the dark

until the slow paper comes
spooling over the edge, waterfalling,
horse-tailing, the hot words leaping.