



Practical Resources

Extract 1 from *Hospitals and Other Buildings That Catch Fire* by Phil King

Katie comes to Tom K

Tom K Yesterday ... Sometime ... Sometime between Aimee being born and now anyway ... My hand ... My hand is neither old nor young and I have wanted it to be too many things already as to try and shape it now. Best just to let it hang in summer. In alone stillness and grass and all that pain. A duck gets into the water and paddles away. Things fly and buzz over the surface. My hand stays still, itself already too strangled to strangle. I take measure of myself and find I have not been breathing. I look outside of myself and notice she hasn't been breathing either. No breathing on this park bench in summer after the talking ... The truth that, sadly, it won't ever be the same, that we'll never love one another as the other loves us again. But we both sit so still. I breathe slowly, hoping she doesn't notice the small tear it brings, tearing a little corner off me. I want her desperately to stay ... So absurdly simple wishes ... Wishes that are as vague and stupid as wishes are: the fog as you talk to yourself in the mirror. Idle, and always in the process of decay. A pin. Drops. Ducks scatter, the army of families feeding bread disperses and night appears in all its version of that previous stillness. We move that little bit closer. I touch her arm and she doesn't respond. I'm left in a little moment of indecision. Decision; I hug her. She hugs me back. I will her, I wish her to hold me harder. The breath mark vanishes and there is more stillness. I have a small feeling that she pities me, that in some way she feels guilt. I want to go to kiss her but know that if she kisses back eventually she'll just move my chin away, look into my eyes with that expression and smile. I fancy I hear crickets. I hark at brooding night sounds as things come awake, right awake, wide awake, wide smiles smiling on us. I am different now. *[Pause]*

Katie leaves Tom K without him noticing.

I look up and she is gone. She even so carefully deprived me of the leaving of it all. I am left with hands that cannot strangle.