

A BRIEF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HALLOWEEN AND THE AURORA BOREALIS

After the solar flare last October,
I write my brother at a distant Minnesota prison:
We're driving out to find the northern lights on Halloween.
These ideas lead to a deserted beach in eastern Maine.
My friends and I wait helplessly for the caprice
Of the earth's geomagnetic field, and laugh,
Drink beer, and shiver All Hallow's Eve,
Staring into coldly blowing ocean wind
At what may be the darkest sky we've ever seen.
Tears form small aurora borealises
Across these lesser spheres we call our eyes.
I wish the universe would drip light years of sleepy green—
Drips so tangible my face would bear an emerald smear—
I wish the sky would suspend rays and veils of bluish shimmering,
And lift the shifting curtain that obscures infinity,
The curtain that conceals all the real secrets, and keeps us here,
But the clouds prove too vaporous to care
How hard my friends and I can stare at them.
They're too slight, too phosphorescent to cohere.
Within two weeks, however, I receive
The northern lights in a small envelope.
When I first saw them, my brother writes,
I rode shotgun in a snow plow truck in Fairbanks, Alaska.
The guy driving the thing and I were all smiles
And we started doing donuts. I remember
I bought a Mercury Comet for 150 dollars,
A small car I drove into the darkness of Alaska
Until the sky unfolded into brilliant color.