

The Perseids

Philip White

Nerved sparks, the Perseids
tonight, wincing out over Loafer . . .

Father, you taught me to name
these—each streak of fire
signifying entrance into what—
An “atmosphere”? A “world
of light”? Brilliant, persistent
wrecks. They all fall . . .

Father, I’ve fallen six years
and where were you? —“Steady,”
you said when the rock slipped
at the trail, “Steady.”

You were always steady, dying
the way you did, cell
by cell. Until your cravings
turned wild, wanting
the corners of the room back
in kilter, the light “brighter,
brighter.” Until
you wanted nothing.

Father. Anything
was yours and you wanted
nothing. One more time
you could have asked
for coolness and we'd have
bathed you, motioned
and we'd have given you light.
One more time you could have
wakened from your burning
and we'd have held you,
told you, *Here is where
you are, Father. Here
with us. Here. Here.*