

ZERØ GROUND

"Zero means nothing," or so my niece
tells me. She points at the numbers
on her grandmother's balloon. "See that?
Do you know what that means? It means

nothing." No, nothing—her favorite
words. "Daddy, you're nothing. I'm no-
thing. Nothing is nothing." I fetch down
the balloon, put it in her grasp.

"Look. If I take the nine's tail away
it's a zero!" The upside down
nine she does not recognize as six.
I tell her tales about nothing:

Zero is all edge and no angle,
but a web is a zero strung
and scalloped. It collects fragments like:
the cars empty and fill empty

and fill with the face at the window
erased or replaced a wire
rim an orange shirt a spike heel double
yellow line flickered on the street

below cable sway things go missing
or get taken away a sign
says Potait under Audrey Hepburn
the R slipped through the gutter grate

slapped against an oncoming downtown
train the sanity of the man
singing swing lo to the letter G
lips pressed against the service door's

fresh gray paint and then what gets replaced
the naked dandelion tip
a dragonfly alights petal wings
iridescent white clouds by black

smoke from a rooftop barrel a block
by a 10 alarm L.I.C.
warehouse fire and those two blue
beams reminding us what once stood

what once... "Uncle Matthew?" Yes? "You can't
touch my scream." No. No man ever
can. "Never." Never. Not even if
a line bisects the zero ground.

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