THIS IS MATHEMATICS

Pick a number from one to 100. Remember it
but don't tell anyone
This is a game about freedom. About luck.
Wherever you look, there are questions, there
are chances. There are atoms trembling, the
frantic energy of time. Wherever you look
there are questions needing answers. This
one is yours.

*
Pick a number from one to 100. Remember it,
but don't tell anyone. There are so many
ways to make mistakes, to lose
the thread, to shatter.
A cat's eye marble glimmers against
the dust gray cement. Spinning,
it shape-shifts – tells a story in color & light.
The sidewalk is a fog, a deflection.
You can stare into it
for as long as you like.

You draw a circle on the sidewalk in chalk.
Do you imagine it a hole – one you could
disappear into if you forget
how close you've stepped? Or is it
safety, home base – the one spot you can stand
where no one can touch you?
You lie flat on the concrete beside it.
fill it with colored globes.
What kind of belief is this, you might ask.
What are the rules of this game?

*

Pick a number from one to 100.
Remember it. This is important.
Someone you know is sinking this moment –
is growing too tired to play. Someone you
know is writing, *scatter them*
over the water, over the ocean, over
the beach where we were married. Someone you know
is dreaming about wind, about powder & ash.
The water, the air – are they really illusion? Two
chemical states, the same elemental ingredients?
Are the heavens, the gods,
really over our heads? Are we really
a tremble of stardust, a fusion of lights
gone out in the sky? There are so many
ways to shatter.

A fog hangs over the lake
like an echo. Like a smudge.
A little girl corrects her mother – she spins tiny
globes in her fingers, holds one to the light –
not marble, she insists, *glass*. Glass.

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Pick a number from one to 100. Remember
it. There are only so many times
a heart can beat. So many
hours till the fire burns out. This is
mathematics. Add enough data & the
answer reveals. Why is the sky?
How does the face? What if the rain?
When will the heart? Numbers.

A fog hangs over the lake like an echo,
like a habit. A smudge. The little girl
is shouting now. I'm not going to
ask you again.

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There are never enough gods, enough reasons,
enough breath. You know this; you always have.
You bend toward it, let it singe & blister, let it swell,
metastasize. I bend toward you the same way – without
knowing why, without knowing how close we are
to the ending. There is so much
I shouldn't tell you. So many wrong answers
just out of our reach. I am a car stalled on a hillside,
the driver weeping, the taillights out.
You are fog over the river – you don't know how to
stop waiting. It's time. It's time.

*

Pick a number from one to 100. Remember it,
but don't tell anyone. Every ending
is knowable if you're patient. Everywhere you look
there are answers. The air is different here,
electric. This is important. A fog
hangs over the room. A habit. An answer.
Remember it. Stay. I'm not going to ask you again.

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