

Unknown Variables

Drone-

- 1. A male bee who dies shortly after mating*
- 2. A low sustained humming sound*
- 3. An individual who blindly follows some form of idealization, a mindless employee*
- 4. A pilotless missile, aircraft, or underwater vessel controlled remotely*
- 5. A style of combat often dated to the development of the US Predator for targeted killings (as in "drone warfare")*

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The works of fire
On the night of the Fourth
Were friendly

Artificial and green
Neon dandelion heads
That burst into seeds:

The afterthoughts
Of explosions

We gathered these wishes
On phone screens
For the day after the forth

Coming war
But here in the night
Vision sky

The x's keep sprawling
Their incandescent arms outward

As if about to
Embrace us
Before their

Arms fall limp
All around us

Strands
Of smoke tinsel
A growing tissue

Of chalkdust
Hung above the ocean
That the stars shine through

Like erased
Equations

After the fire show
I fell into
A swim

And the night sky rhymed with x
And the sea's waves said why

And the below waist alphabets
Were homesick undertow
From our service men and women
Under seas

Starting a letter with dear mother
Took me down farther
No matter how hard I wrote

And then I saw them
My x's
At the bottom of the ocean

But the ocean depths became a night
Sky I swam through
And the bottom of the ocean became
A desert floor
Whose X's
Were a network
Of lit
Infrastructure
I'd never been inside of

But

...above the waves there is a wind
And above the wind there is a night
Sky which is the screen through which

We see the other worlds' news—a natural
Disaster a disorder a reality
Show whose stars send lances

Of light from long ago
That bind us to disaster
A new world order
Whose seeds I've helped to scatter

Across a desert floor that's
Acidic evidence of an older
Ocean's great recession:

Oh screen between me
And my x's tonight

Make me a mission

Of this security church

But now I've just come back from the war

And the floorboards
Of the ward
Rhyme with
Hey, hello how

To explain leaving time
For months I could only count
The number of moths
Trapped inside me

I guess they were attracted
By my pilot light
The fact I'm unarmored
Though I sometimes run

Through fields of graph paper
Where horses dip their necks
Into math equations—
X's y's and z's
Unknown variables

There are my x's at the bottom of the ocean

I'm always friends with my
X's
But
Then I saw that x
And it was like
Y

And how
Are you
But all the time like
I'd known you

In another form
As my 1
In the war I'd just come back from
Where I never saw
Where I never saw
You
But

...then it was so windy we sought
A hissing grove
To plant the x's
Beneath your dress
To trace the thighs
Back into existence
To expose our legs to sprawl

I believed in the underside of leaves
When the wind rifled through them
And I got so drunk
Off the sap in my torso
The stores of wine that poured
From my bruised liver
That I knew not why the rib caged
Bird would warble at the door
Of my breast
Wanting out

Then wanting in again
Like an indoor
Outdoor
Past

There is my
X
On the desert floor

Where
Her hair
Crosses my

Cross hair
That's where
We planted

The X she
Shattered
Without

Sound on
A screen
Of green

Night

Grief

*** **

as my breath is but math
i await
your return

of fire

the equations
are getting shorter
as we find out who the variable is

the target i killed
but never got to say
your name
oh x