

## 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

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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

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...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

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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

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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