

The Middle Distance

Bring me back to earth again –
I was miles away, trying to bring into focus
the middle distance,

life outside the office.

Whenever I turn and look
I can see all the way to when
my dad and I climbed the hilltop tower
above our house at 28 *The Chine*.

(I glance back at the office clock
still showing a minute to the hour.)

That was the day a high wind scattered
early words between us, my five-year-old voice
lost against the air – but he understood
a child's cry when I couldn't keep up.

He lifted me up in his salesman's grip.

At my age
he started selling cars,
ticking off the way things were:
marriage; mortgage; thirty years of mileage
between the showroom, the forecourt, and home.

Now, the hilltop tower blurs on the horizon;
my work's made me more short-sighted than him.

Bring me back to earth again –
I was trying to focus on the middle distance
opening out in front of the mind,

the heart still trailing several steps behind.

Garlic

Striking the clove with a quick burst of pressure before you remove the skin means you skip all the work of having to peel each side of the garlic individually.

Instead, take your knife – flatten it – then bash the elliptical herb from above (taking care not to crush it completely).

Getting this depression technique right means that each clove's faint sheath falls away, like tissue, in a single breath.

It means you save time and cut through all the dull attributed effort you thought the thing concealed.

It also means the world.