

Please Refrain from Celebratory Gunfire¹

Tomorrow at midnight they will come out
onto their porches, into their yards.
They will point their guns toward
the stars and fire until they hear *click*
and go back inside to chase the gunpowder
taste from their beery tongues with 40s and loud.²
Their rapid-fire reports will linger sporadically
long after the fireworks from the harbor
crescendo with their sustained thunder.
On New Year's Day the news will tell us
of someone's skull splitting—*kachuk*—
as revelers miles away turned to find
a body collapsed lifeless on the ground.

Tomorrow night I will listen in the charged air
and wait for the stars to fall from holes
where they were shot out
of the night like the eyes of gods
we have all long since forgotten
to thank for the round earth, gravity,
the brains to measure the trajectory
of seasons, the sense to get out
of the way of our own history,
the foolishness to repeat it time
and time again as our intentions
come crashing back to earth in a heap
and wait for dawn's cold light to bathe us
with the promise of living another year.

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¹ Sign taped to the front door at a New Year's Eve party at a house in Charles Village, Baltimore, 2003.

² Street term for high-quality marijuana, or marijuana laced with other substances