

To the Guy Who Stole My Flybox Last September on the Yellowstone



I'VE BEEN TRYING NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT, how even now you must be browsing through my hare's ears and pheasant tails, my midges and Tricos and single San Juan worm lonely on the third row, squirming for a tailwater.

Are you paying attention? To the beadheads and brassies and battered egg patterns, the attractors and damsel flies in distress. Have you noticed how the caddis flies bully the Baetis, for instance? And don't forget

the terrestrials, the beetle and bee. (They conspire.) I hope you're not taking them for granted, the flash-a-buggers fancy as kids at the prom, the blue-collar Dave's hoppers and bitter old Bitch Creeks, the sofa pillow taken

by the brown trout of my life. You couldn't know how that fish ran me into my backing, nor that awful moment of deflation when I pulled the hook. But if you don't mind, try to consider the pauses as I sat on sun-warmed rocks,

the box open on my knees while I studied the rows of string and steel like pawns on a chessboard, my fingers hovering before making their move. Have you noticed yet how the flies want to take on lives of their own? How they slip back

into their foam slots like veterans off the plane, bruised and battered but quick to spin a story. I hope you know how to read it, my book of flies, the heartbreak of snags, the smooth, rolling pleasure of a good cast, the way, the world

telescopes down to a single white speck, floating high through rough water. **BSJ**