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## Weight, Weight: Don't Tell Me

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***Weight, Weight: Don't Tell Me***  
Theodore Wampuszyc

After the cuff loosens on my arm and the  
thermometer slips out from under my tongue  
It's out of the chair and  
onto my feet and

onto a little gray platform  
that will spit out a three-digit number that will  
tell me what I'm worth.  
Or, maybe they'll just ask me  
"What Do You Weigh?"  
Oh, Christ. Let slip the dogs of war.

Despite the fact that no stethoscope presses its  
frigid thumbprint to my chest,  
I take a deep breath and try to remember  
What do I weigh?

As much as five boxes of cat litter bought in bulk  
To bring to the shelter on Tuesdays and Saturdays  
Or a little less than three kids, because

In between the microchipping, cat-smooching,  
And endless sweeping at the shelter  
I tutor on  
Mondays  
And that weighs something too.

My weight in books would never be enough,  
Because more than the "too many breads" and the  
"too many sweets,"  
Yes, more than those, I swallow endless words

And disgorge them by pen and by keyboard alike  
A thousand stories in my belly  
Either written or yet unborn  
And what must that weigh?

It's all just one measurement on the costumer's  
sheet of many  
When they fit me in armor,  
Or naval slacks, or spritely wings,

Denim, flannel, leather, tulle,  
It's cut-sewn-buttoned, made for me  
And in this heart are a dozen writers' plays  
Pressing down on this scale

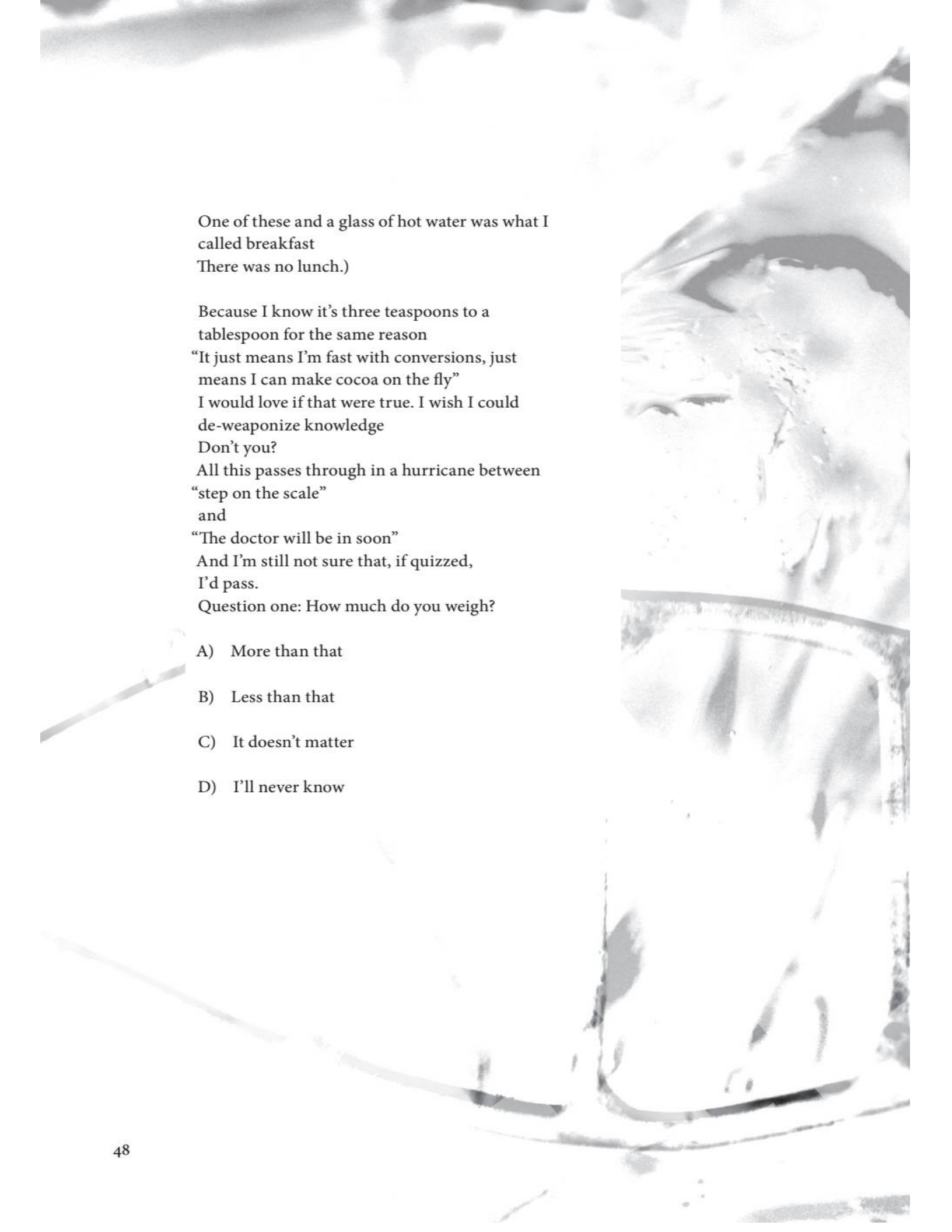
Bouncing the needle higher, ever higher, it  
seems.

As a child I loved dragons  
And in high school I played the xylophone  
So it's not all scales that fill me with dread  
Maybe that's why it's high, I reason—the dread  
pulls me down.  
Or the phone in my pocket? The soles on my boots?  
I could cut my hair or trim my nails or strip off  
my clothes or tear off my skin to ease the number  
lower lower lower lower....

Numbers are the worst part  
Because this number will be in my head all day  
week month year

Because even now after almost a decade of alleged  
recovery  
I still remember how many calories are in the bags  
of Doritos served in my middle school  
cafeteria:

(160 in the Nacho Cheese, 10 fewer if you opt  
for the Cool Ranch



One of these and a glass of hot water was what I  
called breakfast  
There was no lunch.)

Because I know it's three teaspoons to a  
tablespoon for the same reason  
"It just means I'm fast with conversions, just  
means I can make cocoa on the fly"  
I would love if that were true. I wish I could  
de-weaponize knowledge  
Don't you?  
All this passes through in a hurricane between  
"step on the scale"  
and  
"The doctor will be in soon"  
And I'm still not sure that, if quizzed,  
I'd pass.  
Question one: How much do you weigh?

- A) More than that
- B) Less than that
- C) It doesn't matter
- D) I'll never know