

An Occasional Smile

Mark Safran

I want to doodle on the train
But it's rocking
And shifting
And swaying so much;
Making it hard to touch the paper to my pen.

This rolling along
Keeps on lulling a song or a poem out of my head;
Little splinters and threads of ideas and regrets.
But at least I'm feeling better than this long, long day that transpired out before me
and tore at my skin like the pilings flashing by,
like staccato dashes punctuating black
and fear against the chalky sky.

We click and clack through open curves
Revealing sweeping bays and trees
We move along
We cross a bridge
We catch a glimpse of 95,
its angry red clogged arteries.

But I am on the train and reading an email from my friend
on another train
in another state
and she offers this exchange:
Don't always get out the ladder and reach way up there on the highest shelf searching for nostalgia, for
passion, for disappointment in your empty hand;
 just smile my old friend.

So this poem is a little smile
It takes me and the train through a few more miles
Winding through Maryland
Winding through words
Swaying and a shifting
Rocking along
Rolling past useless dead-end roads
Lulling out another song.