

Ideas Are Like Stars

Mary Chapin Carpenter

Today Joseph is sitting alone
With occasional nods to the waitress
She tops off his cup while she's snapping her gum
Making her rounds on the lunch shift

Counting out coins, he leaves them arranged
In neat lines and circles and arcs
She just stares at the tip that spells out her name
And ideas are like stars

And yesterday pedaling down 4th Avenue
Between the stalls and the bookshops
The sepia tones of a lost afternoon
Cradled a curio storefront

And inside the air was thick with the past
As the dust settled onto his heart
And here for a moment is every place in the world
And ideas are like stars

They fall from the sky, they run round your head
They litter your sleep as they beckon
They'd teach you to fly without wires or thread
They promise if only you'd let them

For the language of longing never had words
So how did you speak from your heart
Yet here is a box that swears it has heard
That ideas are like stars

Tonight Joseph stood out in the yard
As Debussy played from the kitchen
Celestial companions 'til mornings first lark
Shone overhead and he listened

And who was that shadow there by the gate?
Who was that there standing guard?
It was only loneliness and loneliness waits
And ideas are like stars, ideas are like stars