On my cutting board, I discovered them,  
the tiniest of ants, roaming dots of lead.  
At first, they were too few to classify, hiding  
under crumbs, these scavengers of leftovers.  
Admiring their labor, I immediately granted them  
citizenship, these tailgaters of a kitchen’s routines.

In Miami, I had no stove, working far from my home.  
My wife was a midnight call to San Bernardino.  
While searching for crumbs, especially for  
the taste of apricot jelly, they fell into a line  
across my cutting board; I saw it again,  
saw the line my sixth-grade teacher drew  
on the board, pointing to each end.

While he planted himself on his desk, he leaned  
his face toward us, telling us in a low voice:

“You don’t see it yet, you’re too young  
still, but that line in front of you continues  
infinity on either side. And if there is  
the slightest slope in that line, either way,  
it will slowly begin to sag, then curve and veer  
and eventually one end will find the other.

And lines, lines are never perfect, they are  
like us, never completely straight. So just  
imagine the searching that goes on all  
around us, every day. And to happen on  
that union is really to witness the most earthly  
of forms you’ll ever get to know. If you’re lucky,  
you’ll see that, even luckier if you’re part  
of that union.”


Source: Vital Signs (Heyday Books, 2013)