

Richard Jackson

Day and Night

All those nights releasing the heart's pent-up prisoners.
All those nights with their doorframes frozen around me.
All those days Love passed over like the shadow of a plane.
All those days Love pulled you from the path of a car or train.
Why are my pockets still lined with everything you say?
Why is the house so quiet? Why can't the stars speak?
There are leather trunks of feeling stored in the attic.
Now love seems to leak from the faucets. What you did,
what you didn't do, your face seeming to tremble in the rear
view mirror, and behind you, a landscape of deserted streets,
boarded-up houses, farms overgrown with weeds and distrust.
I have only myself and these words with their secret meanings
like missing teeth. The wind plays carelessly with the flowers.
All those days and nights you wrapped yourself in scarves
of indifference. All those mornings that shrugged away the pain.
The crickets stunned into silence. What was the point of all those
hours marching past like deserting soldiers? You are standing
there again with your explanations like dead-end roads. There's
an old man waiting beside one of them with his hobo's staff
and scarf. He wants to believe the words that rise out of
his own lungs. This poem is for him. Now the moon turns away.
The day holds its breath. All those empty words walking
hand in hand in the rain. All those cicadas, now, after rain,
calling, pulsating in unison like a huge breathing animal.
Breathe in love, breathe out pain. Everything in balance.
Lightning struck my laurel but it hasn't died. What can you say?
All these folds of light embracing you like your lovers.
A dove steps off a ledge several stories up to test our faith.
Your eyes are walls. The wind won't leave me alone.
The ghosts of your touch on my soul. The moon a cello.
There were never any stars. Only our lost loves are real.