

Winter Dawn

Between the horizon and me
stand naked hedges of windbreak trees
like cobweb I wish to brush away,
obscuring the sunrise whose colors
are embers windswept to flame.

The sky laughs at the brambles and lets
the tallest twigs tickle her underbelly
as she stretches her Easter palette
across her full expanse,
making chiffon of meager clouds.

I remain shrouded in drowsy night
lumbering through my morning's paces,
clearing sleep from the corners of my eyes.
My soul, bare as branches, watches
til sunrise is everywhere.

Clouds feather in high currents,
plume and catch colors cast off
from the sun, pink and gold;
the sky jewels the dewy troposphere
like she has light to spare.

Morning's pageant pulls me into
a cold yard, ice under toes
thrilling me to new wakefulness.
The sweet pain chills me to life
as children elephant-herd downstairs.

I bow to a coronation of the day
as the sun breaks the horizon gash-like
but leaving no wound, only layering
light upon light, and warmth too,
before flattening to standard blue.

Back inside I pour milk into cereal bowls
hoping the flame holds beyond morning,
knowing the kindling will cool,
and I must find a sun inside me
bright as day, and persevering.

Niemöller Redux and other poems

Niemöller Redux

First they came for protected status recipients and childhood arrivals,
discarding decades of lives built, and I did not speak out—
because I was born here.

Then they came for gay and transgender people,
politicizing bakeries and bathroom stalls, and I did not speak out—
because I'm straight and my gender identity matches my birth sex.

Then they came for the disabled and differently abled,
disappearing housing and health care, and I did not speak out—
because my brain and body are typical.

Then they came for the ecumenical and minority faiths,
sanctuaries given little Peace on Earth and even less Goodwill, and I did not speak out—
because my orthodoxy happened to be in their righteous camp.

Then they never came for me; my privileges held—
of birth,
of class,
of color,
of belief.

But I found myself alone with wolves,
a sparse and hungry collection of “right-kind-of” people
now petrified and dangerous.

I looked across a wide river to a far shore.
There I saw the dancing, laughing, drinking, praying, journeying crowds—
and I swam for my life.

Niemöller Redux and other poems

I hereby solicit

the reestablishment of
keening,

wailing and

ululations—
talons of sound to tear
at the strangle of breath-stealing
headlines and

bulletins breaking

backs and

families split open.
Walking in search of relief,
I encountered a
hawk in flight and a
perched hawk.
It is only

in flight

I heard

their shrill shriek.
Does a perched hawk cry out,
or must flight loose his call?
Perhaps we, by
screaming as they do,

will learn to

fly too.

Niemöller Redux and other poems

Hymn

sometimes holiness is in the hunger
sometimes in the feast
sometimes in the water
sometimes in the thirst
sometimes holiness is lonely
sometimes finds a friend
sometimes holiness is nowhere
then it's everywhere again

Dusk Dreaming

Worn down nibs,
we weary our way into evening
to rest, past-ready for warmth and
the gentle press of kids' bodies kicking
for couch space and blanket cover; only the dog
between them stills their limbs.

We keep
a quieter counting of minutes
to the tv metronome—Brits baking
their rising doughs and sinking soufflés, showing
sheer humanity, making us laugh, triumph, and deflate
with them—a simple, welcome respite.

The world is at bay
and the room, brightened by beeswax
candles, glows our guarded hearts toward
openness; my little family muddles our messy
way toward each other, beloved and better than
alone by ourselves.

May
you manage the
same mundane blessings;
may your family
find refuge
too.