

Reflections

The River

I dip a hand,
stirring whorls in lazy water,
and you whisper
Don't disturb,
can you not see?
It's your face in my black glass
that will dissolve.

Never again the same
you and I,
reflections smeared
by a careless trifle.

But who has the last laugh,
you burble,
one who cannot but take the path
of least resistance,
or one who resists?
An empty space
hollowed by a blind sweep of hand
fills up like it was never there.
Can you say the same?
you mock,
knowing all the while
that I cannot.

There's too much ease
in being you,
I cry,
Look,
look what I can do!
I whip your glass to froth,

billow up gray silt
and uproot green shoots
whose tiny leaves were just starting
to catch the sun.

You smile through tears
Don't disturb,
can you not see?
Never again the same
you and I,
but after a moment of pain
I will forget.

I bend and look
into dancing wavelets,
this time without
so much as breathing out,
until the surface stills to glass again,
or nearly so.
I look
for my self
reflected in reborn symmetry,
for something real
that I might grasp.
All mirth and mercury,
only the river looks back.

Peaks

Call me to the valley
and remind me
of needs to be met
and duties I left
to run breathless to peaks
so I might seek
snowy white wisps
of cotton to kiss
or just dare lightly to touch.
If I could brush
apart the air
to feel the rare
cold wind on my face
sweeping space,
the universe in a small
moment--Yes, call,
call me down
before I drown
in fluid starry dreams,
flickering gleams
and ghostly sprites
--but wait, not tonight!
Tonight let me fly,
let me breathe, and sigh
that now--now I know
and tomorrow
I will not speak
my secret. Peaks
will rise some other day,
valleys stay
and need tending.
It's hard ending
joy for sorrow
But tomorrow...

Good Hands

She sat up straight of a sudden,
her breath coming hard,
her flailing heart beneath a hand
spread flat, then curled tight,
as if to say
Hand, be my heart, my life is in you!
Her hand was in the wrong place,
but their hearts were in the right one,
they affirmed.

They did everything they could.
That's what they told
the faceless stricken
who grieved in cold rooms
imprisoned in their souls.

They cried in private later too,
not so much for her,
she was one more unfortunate case--
but for themselves.

She was in good hands
they agreed,
and half believed it was true.

Who did they think they were?
With every consultation,
all the documentation,
the blessing of the daily reported-to,

they lived uncertain
of what slipped through gloved fingers
or porous minds.

Tomorrow should be different,
sighing ease and painless night
winning the day.

Statistics are that way,
friendly to the statistician.

Souls don't obey
as one memory grows
while others wither away.

Good hands carry the past,
bear a mass unbearable,
and just keep holding--holding
until nothing's left but light.

Fire

You can see it in the fire,
the sweet fevered delusion
that refuses to be quenched
by a shock of ice water
thrown in its face.

You can feel it, you know it lurks
just beneath the surface
as your coiled energy
stretches and shrinks in rhythm
with your shifting soul.

You see yourself as hot and cool
in a world of the tepid.
You look in a mirror of quicksilver,
and see molten beauty
burnished to the right patina
but it's all slick surface.

Even when flames lick at your feet
as if to say wake up, leave this place,
Get out fast, before you burn
like a snapped dry twig--
You hear crackling
and assume it's your personality.
You feel hot embers
and take them for witticisms.

Let the scales fall from your eyes
and gaze at what's real.
If even the sun can be eclipsed,
so will your feeble delusions.
You can see it in the fire,
if you look hard enough.

