

DARK POEMS with FLOWERS

1. Failure

The critics in connivance with the crowd
of onlookers, now ready, pounce, like cats
upon defenseless birds. Nothing's allowed
to spoil their day. Intense, persistent gnats,
they nibble at exposure until welts
reduce your masterpiece to something else.

Their reasons cast a rich and poisonous cloud
on work no touch or tinkering can save,
so there you are, before a laughter loud
as boisterous praise you'd hoped to have.
There is no contradicting what they say:
a part of you—admit it—died that day.

2. Alone

I was not there for you,
alone in your corner,
the sentence passed without me.
Leaving, did you still see
one last solemn mourner
as a last remembered view?

No matter what we say,
the milk, the toys, the tears,
the love affairs, the beddings,
the unsuccessful weddings,
successful lost careers,
lead up to this one day.

We offer up clichés:
you can't go home again;
this will be your last bed
(without it being said).
Thoughts linger there, and then:
let me count the ways

I've failed you once again:
you died alone that night
and something in me, too,
dies to think of you,
alone, so small with fright,
an hour, maybe two, then gone.

3. The Second Chair

A stanza layout might have done as well,
the first reserved for placement of the chairs,
one on which to place the “clothes from hell”—
the ex’s name for them while flaunting airs,
before an elder drew her from the house,
colleague turned to lover turned to spouse.

But dwell a while on folds, on how the shirt
is centered on the pants, the favorite pair
of shoes presented so they won’t pervert
the symmetry so necessary there.
All clear except for matters of intent:
for whom is such a presentation meant?

The other chair, placed in such a way
that ample line three days ago, procured,
then cut to calculated length, just *may*,
with careful, out-stretched effort be secured
according to a premeditated scheme,
to chandelier or fashionable beam.

Such simple preparation—amazing how
calculations of the mind—so spare—
may in their wards of ordering allow
the setup leading to the second chair.
Climb up, the week’s compulsion tells you now,
complete the promise-of-a-lifetime vow.

But no!—Allow for just one pause before
embarking on the poem’s end. Misled,
allow a simple stanza’s metaphor
to edit with fresh words your life ahead.
Now breathe, climb down, and take another breath,
and let these words displace the luring will of death.

4. Wild Rain

Life springs up before me, a shoot
of new season, urging me on
with discoveries, sprouts thriving
in the mulch of last year's plantings
rooting in their bed of forgiven failures.
Everywhere, the blooms beckon
pick me, too many to count, enough
to pluck those in the bud of first blush,
so many untaken time will, past flower,
fold then in, revive them for a future.
The world is shaped by water.
The last stems drink it in,
aiming their gaudy blossoms at the sun,
or, on a darker day, the clouds gathered
in billows of desire. These colors strain
with longing, blood memories at their roots
thirsty for anything the heavens have to offer.
Wild rain takes my breath away.