

The Noble Fear or Courage

Humbled threads am I as I try to sort
through this masquerade of work and life
boredom and death
Living at breakneck pace with all my little worries
they pile on my bedspread and threaten to say
"You do not belong You are a fraud You lie every day
about everything You have no place"
And thinking about this place and lies and days
which my fear thrusts before my faces
I concede the point to them; I am a fraud
I say I write poems create drawings worlds
But I do none of these
I paint meanings down the sides of my words
I transcribe lessons in the feathers and beaks of cardinals
Hoping that those who can read them find direction.

Like me, all people are lost for a while
thinking themselves to bare threads and bones
of their former selves
Until there is nothing left but the foundry on which
all of their dreams and quirks and quips are built.
Why then do I share this music with them?
Are we not all lost? Doomed are the children

who have yet to learn to fly from the nest
Who fall prey to fear's worst part and pastimes.
Lingering under the shade of our sympathy
because the sunshine and happiness of the world can
yes, can become too hot on our open eyes
And the sun's rays of duty can become a weight made
of golden lead; for is gold not heavy also?
Come under the wings then, O lost ones, come
For the sun is only meant for the ripe, and
we are but young.

Then, when the evening casts its royal purple blanket
over our tortured and sunburned heads, we
take walks in the duskligh like opossum
searching and ever searching, with our tails curled behind us
and our young clinging to our hair with eyes streaming against
the moon. A softness comes over all
And in that softness we are hardened and bolstered in our armor
And we go from mewling tree-clingers to striding wolves
Breathing authority from our keen nostrils and tracking
the meaning that is elusive as elk and as sharp as granite shard.
We trot after it, all together in the pack
Fearing and yet believing together in our own strength
For Alpha and Beta and Omega mean nothing now in the darkness
Or even in the fire-tipped snows of the tundra

Where life appears as well as is ripped away
And now we are all pulling down and grasping that strength
Fighting our own meaning into its place.
Using powers we have always had and living within each other
And without each other.
We are sure and swift, we are kind and frugal
We sing without peering over our shoulders
And we be to be, knowing our minds are
our mothers at heart.

And we are still afraid.
But now it is a noble Fear
A hoary wild animal;
Not a pitch devil.