MUCH OF THIS, WITHOUT YOU

Jack Stilwell

I run in the black
Alone, wearing black
My footsteps speak silent
Greetings, diffuse blindly
Biting cold air, cutting my lungs
Side-stepping headlights
Ducking past windows
I careen around corners
And bury my feet in hills
Running the tread off my shoes
Running out of my shoes,
Off the road, into the black

This is not a hard life
My reflection tells me again
Waking every day to win
My bent ear reminds me
I’m twinless, but not so alone
Catching the earth before
It rolls away beneath my feet

Smiling in the snow
Deciding I like it here
It’s unclear and here
Not a matter of where,
Not of place or frame of mind
But wholeness
All without and all within me

I love the lives in the crowds
Their bickering stories
Their lingering glances
And peripheral musings
The strangers, cell phone locked
Who collide front to front,
Bodies meshing in an intimate tangle
A blushing hurried rush away
Are you one?
But they’re not on their own

Turning stones underfoot,
Winking, walking past picture frames
Driving at night in the rain
Without lights or wipers,
Without any thought at all

And if I see you now you’re
Just around shoulder height
Thin as grass, so thin that
You’re gone again
Carried off on a wind

Strong is the mantra
Unexposed metronome
POETRY

Fasten the ties, turn the screws
Pick myself up again and again
Scrub the rust, bare, anew
Breathe, pure breath, full breath
Perpetually gaining
Shedding excess
Always evolving
I was born so life is mine
Repeat, run the drills
Remember the lines

I stood on the porch and
Watched gravel spit from the
Tires and smelled the smoke
Licking skyward from the new
Tattoos in the asphalt,
The burnt rubber reminders
We could not catch you
Gone in less than a moment
I still don't know what it's like

Write it down, every moment
Write it without word or feeling
Experience—and lock it away
Own all the pieces, savor them
Ensnare the surrounding world
It all comes in handy

Feeling full all alone and lost
Within others, I remind myself
There is no lonely place
Yet you went off on your own

I forget there is no right way
Intention in all conscious thought
Dissecting the brain daily
My motion and straining
Bettering body and mind
I do it all so I might
Create something beautiful
Though that means so little
Having not done so
Having no idea what it's like
Chancing there's nothing else

The lines unravel, lift off my tongue
Distracted and curious
Dancing away, dancing toward you
Would you grow with me?
Mantra fading fast
Lost on an echo
Sea standing still
There's comfort in stasis

This is not a hard life
And there is no lonely place
But I still don't know what it's like
But maybe I'll float
Off the binding on a breeze
And past the noise
Like when I walk in the crowd
Halfway there, yet halfway
Lifting from my shoes,
Overhead and out of sight
Picked by a faceless whim
Carried across congested light
POETRY

Rolling along sun-kissed waves
Of budding and bending stalks
Smoothing textured hills beneath me
Smearing the earth's pallet in my palms
Its paints sinking in crease and callous
I pause over whitewater
Foaming
Breaking
The tide returns
Stretched in pushes and pulls
Teased in rises and falls
Reminded just how close

Drifting frames, swaying view
Line flying off the reel
At any moment the tether
Might unfurl and draw
Too taut and sever
With a snap—and there,
That's it then,
Just like you
Must be what they call "a sudden"
I'd like to stay awhile,
So, you know,
I won't say I'm gone, but—
There I go.

SNOW GLOBE
Cappy Spruance

I want to rummage through stacks of books with you,
dirty, musty books,
so that when we rustle their pages we choke with joy.
I want to sit on the floor, legs crossed
and pile adventures in my lap.
You'll stand on a stack of encyclopedias and reach for
that perfect copy of Alice in Wonderland
while I flip through Tom Sawyer
until you reach down and say, "I found this one for you."
I want to be lost with you inside a fiction more beautiful than the
huge snow globe we inhabit,
always shaken by someone else til we're displaced
tiny flakes in a fish tank.
So I think if I have to get lost, I'd like to be holding your hand
when my dreams for this life
seem so broken
like this damned snow globe
because aren't they supposed to make you smile
and turn the sky white?
The sky was grey today. This snow globe's defective.
I want to be poor with you,