

Fall 1977

Nine Parts of These Days

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Recommended Citation

Clark, Sylvia (1977) "Nine Parts of These Days," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 9 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss9/12>

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NINE PARTS OF THESE DAYS

I

Now I see I have done.
I have done everything wrong.
Friends are no longer drifting
the aisles, that clock is a vigorous
tick. I want to be home.
Red bugs raised in this night
decide what they must do. Walk.
Beware the corner, it is a snake.
This night I am through forgiving,
through becoming an inch, no miles left
and no steps. I stop
with seven words to give up:
mother home water brown dark
tree and dirt. I have left
and this is it.

II

Coats shrug off shoulders and rest.
Even old brooms have nice homes in the halls.

Do you know the riddle of oceans?
That when you step in, you sink?

In oozing fungus, little creepers dig in.
In this way, they live out the cold.

She drank all she could of salt drink.
Her fingers picked open shells.

Rocks make homes in dirt for themselves.
The sea, it keeps rushing at her.

III

These days go by fast and we don't count.
Nothing counts anymore but your hand
on my arm saying yes, this
is the way, this way
we won't have to forget.
I've been writing letters
unaddressed in envelopes
written to you. They pile
naked in stacks on my desk.
Keep in touch, you say to the walls
of the library, concrete and full
of your law. I tell you
I keep on falling, the weight
of your body pressing
against what I have to do.

IV

Walking this morning for money, I keep
my insides clean. Someone is singing.

How do we know when the bridge opens?
Hold one finger to wind.

If it stays wet, you're in luck.
Otherwise, draw the frontiers.

Opening the present of hands, the rain
falls down in dribbles. Five fingers.

The boundary closes between love and hate.
Through the wide gates, much rushing.

V

Each time I bury my heart, light
seeps in through dirt.
The last time it happened, yesterday,
I sat all night.
Leaves outside my window turn
with a color too late to begin.
This time the pale red of pounding
closes inside my ears.
I underline words, bending
to hear the beat
inside our hands, these bridges broken.

VI

Bugs and bears know the way of the jungle,
only, they are smarter than me.

If I can't lie, I'll have to whistle.
Sound rings itself like tin.

Once I saw a girl in a cloak
made of grass. She swayed.

The green girl one day picked up her shoes.
Dark churches go along on their avenues.

Heavy boots stomp signs in new snow.
Tongues flapping, her shoes plan escape.

VII

Wind carries small seeds in your hand
and it is open. I pry
into what I can see. Nothing
obsesses, you say, holding your knee.
My hand is limp inches away.

This morning, like any other, the leaves
on my windowsill turn
away from my looking. The street
remains empty, I shuffle
through years of return.
How many times will I wait
and say listen, my ears are resting.

VIII

He will be walking on cement. I will say,
Hello, it's been a long time.

February is still a cold month, no matter
what they say. Somebody stole my coat.

I hope they like those nice feathers.
Didn't you always like me in green?

I think his eyes turn my way.
My new coat is brown, like his hair.

Mostly I try not to think. It gets in my way
when I'm trying to make conversation.

IX

Not that it wasn't a nice coat, just
that it was too shiny.
Of all my things, this
was not precious, as nothing is
anymore. Leaves gather and winter
comes in open windows, a scent
of bare hills. Covers thrown,
I ask you in to share night
and think about ferns, how they push

against dirt, going under each fall.
My sister, the coat stealing woman,
each day forgets she grows old.

I trust heat, my skin
to keep in this weather.
Ice freezes salt and the coat
you offer I'd wear all my life.
Even here with you, it gets that cold.