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All Night the Rain

Nancy W. Prothro

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ALL NIGHT THE RAIN

I

All night the rain follows me, down black underground rivers,
into caverns of sleeplessness. The rain swallows me down:

“Touch me. I’m sharp as ice. Touch me, the splinter in your eye.”

II

Swoop the chimney, swallow, my mother is dying. In her hair is
the dew of kisses she never gave us. Her hands are young. She
speaks harshly, as if we were children sullen at dinner.

How often I ran to the sea’s edge, stood on the shore washed
by moonlight: tidepools of stars, caves urine-damp, marines by
a bonfire drunk and singing.

III

Ash, ash. He stirs the smouldering flame. Ash. His daughter
is not there, though the pigs still root the yard and here are the
buttons from her blouse. Ash. He stirs and stirs, but she is gone.

Where are they now, who went to war, who left the war? Once soldiers
marched. I followed a coffin, carrying the army blanket of one
who would not return.

IV

Tonight the stars are teeth. The sky’s jaw hangs wide. Mother,
your songs once whittled the dark, hummed me a kingdom, sucked
from my ear the splinters of crying—

Oh, Johnny, marry me now; the moon fills with dust; it’s late.