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## First Poem from Slovakia: A Dream in the Carpathians

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Gary Gildner

## *First Poem from Slovakia: A Dream in the Carpathians*

After I died I began to wonder  
where my grave would be. On a hill  
among shady trees? Near a golden river?  
In the center, oh God, of a buzzing cloverleaf?  
An old friend I hadn't seen in years came dancing by  
wearing a bow tie and a stovepipe hat, and said, "It's bad,  
not having any home—I know—but what *I've* done  
is leave a note, with arrows pointing out the way,  
funny directions to make everyone laugh."  
We laughed at the brilliance of this notion  
and then, doffing his hat, he was off, oddly dodging  
the monuments and stones crowding around us,  
as if playing a kind of cops-and-robbers.  
I woke. The room was lit with sky, with fall, and a coppery  
light from at least three countries—  
and the warm girl smiling beside me  
whom I loved, had loved last night in the mountain's  
glow, said, "Well, here we are on Baba, did you sleep OK?"  
I told about my friend, his brilliant plan, his hat,  
and how he scampered off, apparently in a cemetery.  
"How strange," she said, looking sadly away,  
"I dreamt you were dying, I think in a theatre—  
I was crying, sick with grief, and yet I wanted,  
terribly, to fuck you one more time. I even  
used that word, I didn't care who heard me.  
Oh, but it was all right, you whispered kindly,

like an old doctor, both arms reaching up  
to help me down, considerate of my dress, my hair,  
and saying—they were your last words—  
you had a long, important speech to make and would be  
practicing now. That was the hard part, darling—  
your being so nice about it, so polite.”