

RACHEL TZVIA BACK

**IN THE QUIET HILLS:
LOST & FOUND LYRICS**

Day

Day that began would always begin with night.
Dusk unto dusk, ever the whole, first three stars
could tell. This first abiding form.

As in Eden

 before Eden was formed –
that Dusk, into dark unbordered air
as with intimate infinite care
the spirit first moved over the face
 of the Sleeping the quietly
Breathing *his infant self and space wholly*
undivided. Close by you watch, to measure
each miraculous breath, remnant of the
world before first light: just Dusk
unto Dusk.

Stars

That were jewels in the sky's blackstone mansion.
Small temples for the unforgotten.
Sanctuaries for lost Tidings,
sent with this plea:

*Give news of me
to she whom I love who
loves me
like no other Tell her*

I am here

Bound by earth thicket, beside
the Well. I keep watch in the dark

for Dawn's slender orange skirt, gentle silk
on more slender self, there where she waited, under
the gold-domed ceiling, at the top of the glittering stairs.

There

At landscape's edge, where half-circle at horizon
carves a mute path rising through nettles in late
summer's brittle and silent heat –

There

is where I can see us, there where
we aren't
climbing to the hilltop.

I watch from my window as we move
past the stone oak, our soft-muscled backs

Side by side in bright

colored t-shirts, yours purple, mine green,
almost touching, there where we are
not I see us ascending – silently
in the distance.

Rain

Then when the rain finally came
we stood at the open doorway and listened.

It was the sound of many
suddenly leaving everything behind, as from
the ancient always, again in flight.

The flow was illusion, each singular met
the parched, the summer-ravaged ground,
and earth was the swollen sound
of stirring toward *safety sister home*

of the solitary, the family, the still-dreaming
child – she who could ask
in the night: *But what does the water want?*
and hear the fragrant all
fluid air answer:

To fall, and to fall – unafraid.

NOTES

Epigraph: By Robin Blaser, from “Image-Nation 5” in *The Holy Forest* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1993), p. 117

Proem: The first lines are by Paul Celan, who writes: “The poem is lonely. It is lonely and enroute. Its author stays with it.” Quoted by Anne Lauterbach in *The Night Sky: Writings On the Poetics of Experience* (NY: Viking, 2005), p. 116.

Bird / First Word: “the nests of her hair” is from Tuvia Ruebner’s “Awakening”: “and the birds / in the hidden nests / of your hair.” In *In the Illuminated Dark: Selected Poems of Tuvia Ruebner* (HUC and University of Pittsburgh Presses, 2014), p. 55.

For “the nothing / that is there,” see Wallace Stevens’ “The Snow Man,” particularly its final stanza: “For the listener, who listens in the snow, / And, nothing himself, be holds / Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” *Harmonium*, 1923 (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 11.

Day: For “the spirit moved over the face...” see Genesis 1:2: “And the spirit of God moved over the face of the waters.” The Jewish day begins at sundown.

The Well: The poem’s first line alludes to Lucille Clifton’s poem “the lesson of the falling leaves” that opens with the line “the leaves believe.” See *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton 1965-2010*. Kevin Young and Michael S. Glaser, Eds. (Rochester NY: BOA Editions, 2012), p. 157.