

Mercedes Lawry

LEARNING OF A DEATH, ONE CANNOT ADVISE

Borrow the words of lamentation,
the mussel-gray skies of winter.
Make the long days a weight
borne easily. Death writes its
signature with careful strokes,
not hurriedly but with deliberation,
slow and teasing, as if each bone
must be forgiven its life, one by one.
What extraordinary sadness, the blue
whisper of an end, where truth and lies
mingle, supposing no winner.

GERTRUDE STEIN'S BEDSIDE MANNER

Left much to be desired.
Disease was faceless,
a little enemy. How even the body
might reflect the word. Closer
to truth, each syllable, each repetition
while the blood and bone
could only bear so much
and she could not leave it, could not
ascend into the mind-made world
of beautiful and terrible, better
the leopards dreaming on a cliff,
blue roses falling like silent rain
and dead poets searching for
the bleak rivers of their childhood.

AS NIGHT FALLS TO MORNING: AN INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

I was told the bail bondsman was not coming back.
A blue slice of midnight sat on my plate,
uneaten. The little ones were quiet now.
I tore up the family history in as many small pieces
as I could, before my fingers gave up.
The reckless twin shows an affinity for music.
I can hope, loving the piano as I do.
The doors are locked, front and back
and there is no wind to rattle the shutters.
This is my best thinking time. I assess
my situation which continues, in some ways,
the same, lonely as that may be. But winter
is next and I just don't know how much
teeth chattering I can take. We need
another quilt. He told me himself at the moment
of departure. Others had told me earlier.
Warnings, they called it, as if I was stupid.
When I am stupid, it's because I choose to be.
I think I'll make a pie, a pie under the stars,
what a pretty thing. A pie filled with the breath
of babies and whatever I can conjure.
What a fine idea. I set to it.