

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.