

The Hare and the Tortoise

The way I keep trying to write this poem,
plodding into words. First I had a daughter,
then a son. I got married very young,
I stood at the top of the stair, smoking
a cigarette, watching the sun go down,
the frantic starlings. This was the beginning
of what I think of as grief, my second life
poised, ready to dash off. I wanted to
mourn for Jack Kennedy, for my blue Volkswagen,
I wanted to live in a nicely decorated house,
but I kept on. This isn't the story of
a housewife dusting the mantle. It's about
the stubborn drive I have, and you, too. You're
a strange fellow, stretching your neck
into the inevitable world. The subject jumps ahead
and leaves you trudging along, excitement
quickly wilting. Down the road, the troubled
wind, the imprecise laws of science. You pick
your way over debris. You don't exactly
label what you touch. You register it
with a deliberateness that is more
like memory, only always for the first
time. You don't want to get lost. You hope
for an answer. You believe you have a
mate who is far out front, but who may hit
a lull. Then you quit being interested
in a subject. You just want to get through
this with honor. The subject has disappeared
into the meter of your legs, the heat
of the walk. Even the old problem of religion
has dissolved into walking.

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