
Poetry page

Escarpment

Some things wear you down
a deep aging in your center,
an erosion of your soul
or maybe your heart.

It does not kill you, but
it lays you bare,
open - exposed.

This wearing down becomes clear
in the middle of life - in the middle of our days.

One thing comes along
maybe a death, an accident, a final straw that
lights the mind's sky, and,
all at once you see what
has been there all along -
that which has undone you,
that which has worn you away.

There it is.
Don't be shy. It goes against
your earliest hopes, your youthful
ideals, your grand theories. There it is,
a piece of you; one that was
left exposed as if
it were something new.

Like the rock held deep in the earth,
erosion and time pull at the dirt from
around the stone. Alterations.

They pull the dirt from this
piece of you, they move the pebbles
from your side, they move the sand
from behind and you are revealed
by the violence of change.

This need not be a horrid violence -
the great unleashing slide of
the glacier as it tears away from it's
millennial nest - pushing
with a crashing speed.

A simple, negotiated shift
is enough. A slow movement
back and forth, to and fro,
earth and weather,
drifting and decaying and just
simply washing away.

There is a silent consent in
this negotiated shift -
a collusion of innocence and tiredness -
as what is left

deposits her minerals below
in the scarp foot and basin.

There is an inner nod
and assent to this erosion.
This tearing apart is for the whole, for
the whole of the earth
not ours alone.

We sense the need to compromise. We
feel the coming change. We agree and a slow,
violent change occurs. Bit by bit,
I stand here
looking at the scarp
exposed on the hill
and feel the pain
of all the death
that has torn at me, and
layed me open - layed me bare.
Bit by bit.

I see the deep rich soil below

the scarp, below the slope.
I can hear the fiddleheads
bathing in the minerals and
the robust loam built from
tearing. I can hear them grow.

From where I stand, I cannot hear
my own loss as food for the growing. As
food for others. When I am able to
let this dirt slip from me
without complaint,
then I will have become a hill,
a scarp,
a glacier.
Bit by bit.

Some things wear you down
a deep aging in your center,
an erosion of your soul
or maybe your heart.

—Father Dn. Thomas Johnson-Medland, CSJ, OSL
