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Cry for Nothing

Philip Levine

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CRY FOR NOTHING

1

Make the stream
on the hurt faces
of stones, up the hillside
into the black house
of firs. Say
your name to stump,
to silence, to the sudden wings
of the air, say
your name to yourself.
It doesn't matter cause
it all comes back
a red leaf prick
in your crotch, burr balls
tapping at your ankles
with their Me! Me!
the fresh weed tongue lashing
at your cheek
to make you cry
for nothing.

2

Motor roar
of bad clutch, passing
goats, drunk trucks,
cement haulers, night men
coming home on foot, dawn men
going out
and steaming in anger
at the cold. Mark sleeps
next to me, his blond
woman hair tangling
the gear shift, behind
the little ones
breathing in their
bad socks, farting
and gnashing at
the first sex dreams,
and the mama, my alone
woman rolling in the limbo
of sleep. I'm awake
and staring

for the first breaks of light
between the prisoned towers
of hell slums north
of Barcelona and the dark tear-pools
left in the streets.

3

He let her drive
and she crashed her poppa's
front porch. Man
asked for her license
and she 14. The evening
gathering above the wooden
roofs, a heavy darkness
spreading from car lights.
Time to go. Small kids
near the kitchen asking,
and the oven flashing
its magic. Time to go
if you got a place
to go. Man let Luther,
and he called home, her
mother say she gone
early and the baby
be coming by now and
where is he.

He with me
pushing the old black Lincoln
back down the drive
watching the radiator bare
its muddy wounds. Luther
rolling his sleeves up
high and cupping his long
hillbilly fingers around
a flaring match, Luther
cocking his tattoo
against the black rain and
the rain of black luck, Luther
pushing on toward
the jewelled service station
of free cokes
and credit there ahead
in a heaven of blue
falling and nothing
going to make him cry
for nothing.