

1973

Love

Josif Brodsky

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LOVE

Twice I awoke this night, and went
to the window. The streetlamps were
a fragment of a sentence spoken in sleep,
leading to nothing, like omission points,
affording me no comfort and no cheer.

I dreamt of you, with child, and now,
having lived so many years apart from you,
experienced my guilt, and my hands,
joyfully stroking your belly,
found they were fumbling at my trousers

and the light-switch. Shuffling to the window,
I realized I had left you there alone,
in the dark, in the dream, where patiently
you waited and did not blame me,
when I returned, for the unnatural

interruption. For in the dark
that which in the light has broken off, lasts;
there we are married, wedded, we play
the two-backed beast; and children
justify our nakedness.

On some future night you will again
come to me, tired, thin now,
and I shall see a son or daughter,
as yet unnamed—this time I'll
not hurry to the light-switch, nor

will I remove my hand; because I've not the right
to leave you in that realm of silent
shadows, before the fence of days
that fall into dependence on a reality
containing me—unattainable.

Josif Brodsky
translated by
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