

1975

On Waking...

S. J. Marks

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“On waking . . .” / S. J. Marks

On waking
you don't have to cry.

Instead

open the window,
look at the landscape that comes in
and start your breakfast.

The color of the lilacs has faded,
thistles have grown old,
but their lavender tufts and bitter roots
are life's dream.

A despairing man feels boundless empathy
with the simplicity of the huge creased rocks
along the Washington seacoast,
where my father lives.

My tired friend, Steve, his eyes closed,
puffing a Ramondo, talks about money—
how we don't make enough
to live as we want—

and your face draws its image
on stone.

The July loneliness has
changed into August loneliness.

I read Chekhov's *The House with an Attic*,
I'm the landscape artist who loved a beautiful young girl
and was left with this note—

“I told my sister everything, and she insists
that we part. I could not bring myself to hurt her
by disobeying. God will give you happiness.
Forgive me. If you only knew how bitterly
Mama and I are weeping.”

Now, sometimes, when he's painting or reading,
for no reason, he says he recalls
the light in the window, the sound of his footsteps
echoing through the field as he walked home,
in love, chafing his cold hands,
and he feels remembered, waited for.

My dreams drift into the wind and tremble.
There's nothing more to fear.

The past is the dream
of a plum late yesterday trapped
in its

sour blue skin.

Something raps on the window,
after all this finally I
go to see you, but you're out and I leave a note—
"I miss you."

Later, I buy
a hammered copper pitcher
and bring it home
for you.

"Poppies" by Hobson Pittman / S. J. Marks

Six pale pink flowers, six green stems wave
against a brown ground—

this field
remains asleep in whatever we were
when we lived there.

The blossoms lose their memory
and the nights pass,
but the slightest glance from each other
is enough
to give us the same joys those places
filled us with.

So today, you woke beside me,
my daughters sleeping upstairs,
as if, among the long grasses and hidden
raspberries of the meadow,
happy and trembling,
talking about the intimate touches
of our earliest nights,
the books and papers in disorder around the bed,
the birds outside awake, singing,
you would never leave.