The Place

John Lindgren
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Nowhere to sit or lie down here,
By this four-headed river bearing the immense
Silence of heaven to the sea whose vague aphorism
Is spelled on the shores of insomnia and sleep.

The stones here return the blank stares
Of angels, frost erects its secret ministries
And stairways only to erase them at dawn,
And the rain is put to strange uses.

Better to keep walking, born as you are
So far from yourself, under the heavy machinery
Of clouds, the sun on its flaming axle, and that rib
Of moon that calls to the scar in your side.

Wherever you are you bring the emptiness
Of your hands, the forgetfulness of your feet,
The darkness of your mouth and a door on your back.
Glaciers erect their obelisks beneath the stars.

Better not ask to whom they were raised, but go on
Counting the generations of dust and angels on the head
Of a pin, or lie down when you can, with a stone
For a pillow, watching the ladders disappear into the clouds,

And those fantastic shapes ascending and descending
On their errands that never had you in mind, though you wake
In the trumpeting light, in the midst of all
That singing, that praise.