

Bright Copper Kettles

By Vijay Seshadri

Dead friends coming back to life, dead family,
speaking languages living and dead, their minds retentive,
their five senses intact, their footprints like a butterfly's,
mercy shining from their comprehensive faces—
this is one of my favorite things.
I like it so much I sleep all the time.
Moon by day and sun by night find me dispersed
deep in the dreams where they appear.
In fields of goldenrod, in the city of five pyramids,
before the empress with the melting face, under
the towering plane tree, they just show up.
"It's all right," they seem to say. "It always was."
They are diffident and polite.
(Who knew the dead were so polite?)
They don't want to scare me; their heads don't spin like weather vanes.
They don't want to steal my body
and possess the earth and wreak vengeance.
They're dead, you understand, they don't exist. And, besides,
why would they care? They're subatomic, horizontal. Think about it.
One of them shyly offers me a pencil.
The eyes under the eyelids dart faster and faster.
Through the intercom of the house where for so long there was no music,
the right Reverend Al Green is singing,
"I could never see tomorrow.
I was never told about the sorrow."

Source: *Poetry* (December 2010)