

By Louis MacNeice

If we could get the hang of it entirely

It would take too long;

All we know is the splash of words in passing

And falling twigs of song,

And when we try to eavesdrop on the great

Presences it is rarely

That by a stroke of luck we can appropriate

Even a phrase entirely.

If we could find our happiness entirely

In somebody else's arms

We should not fear the spears of the spring nor the city's

Yammering fire alarms

But, as it is, the spears each year go through

Our flesh and almost hourly

Bell or siren banishes the blue

Eyes of Love entirely.

And if the world were black or white entirely

And all the charts were plain

Instead of a mad weir of tigerish waters,

A prism of delight and pain,

We might be surer where we wished to go

Or again we might be merely

Bored but in brute reality there is no

Road that is right entirely.

Louis MacNeice, "Entirely" from *The Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice*, edited by E. R. Dodds. Used by permission of David Higham Associates, Ltd.

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