

# In a Dark Time

## By Theodore Roethke

In a dark time, the eye begins to see,  
I meet my shadow in the deepening shade;  
I hear my echo in the echoing wood—  
A lord of nature weeping to a tree.  
I live between the heron and the wren,  
Beasts of the hill and serpents of the den.

What's madness but nobility of soul  
At odds with circumstance? The day's on fire!  
I know the purity of pure despair,  
My shadow pinned against a sweating wall.  
That place among the rocks—is it a cave,  
Or winding path? The edge is what I have.

A steady storm of correspondences!  
A night flowing with birds, a ragged moon,  
And in broad day the midnight come again!  
A man goes far to find out what he is—  
Death of the self in a long, tearless night,  
All natural shapes blazing unnatural light.

Dark, dark my light, and darker my desire.  
My soul, like some heat-maddened summer fly,  
Keeps buzzing at the sill. Which I is I?  
A fallen man, I climb out of my fear.  
The mind enters itself, and God the mind,  
And one is One, free in the tearing wind.

Theodore Roethke, "In a Dark Time" from *Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*. Copyright © 1963 by Beatrice Roethke, Administratrix of the Estate of Theodore Roethke. Used by permission of Doubleday, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

Source: The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke (Doubleday, 1961)