

Prison Song

By Alan Dugan

The skin ripples over my body like moon-wooded water,
rearing to escape me. Where could it find another
animal as naked as the one it hates to cover?
Once it told me what was happening outside,
who was attacking, who caressing, and what the air
was doing to feed or freeze me. Now I wake up
dark at night, in a textureless ocean of ignorance,
or fruit bites back and water bruises like a stone.
It's jealousy, because I look for other tools to know
with, and other armor, better girded to my wish.
So let it lie, turn off the clues or try to leave:
sewn on me seamless like those painful shirts
the body-hating saints wore, the sheath of hell
is pierced to my darkness nonetheless: what traitors
labor in my face, what hints they smuggle through
its arching guard! But even in the night it jails,
with nothing but its lies and silences to feed upon,
the jail itself can make a scenery, sing prison songs,
and set off fireworks to praise a homemade day.

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