

Rest before you sleep

By Dionisio D. Martínez

Requiem after Fauré, for my father

Rest before you sleep You'll be walking for hours
then as usual away from home your shoes
in your hand your feet not yet used to the road
Perhaps they need to feel the gravel
to know where they're headed


A woman I knew who lived mostly in the woods
mentioned the danger in presuming to know
what an animal thinks The fox for example
stopping by her open tent and looking in

I suppose she would've felt this way about your feet
She would've said how could anyone know
what a pair of tired feet need along the way

I would've asked her how she knew the feet
were tired Such discourse produces nothing
but anything less would be silence
and that would be intolerable
I wish I knew why I was telling you this

It's easier to read the mind of a fox than to guess
what a man's about to say when he returns
from the woods head full of roots veins
more like branches shoes in one hand feet
blistered and none of this necessarily
an indication of how the feet feel what miles
uphill and back have done to the soles
and to the small bones that propel a man

It's safe now I think to speak for the fox
who is only as cunning as we say it is
We're the only creatures that claim to be anything
then build a house of facts around the claim



I've come for vindication No point in trying
to disguise it as a lesser wish Wake up stop
while you still know where you are Put away
your elusive country Give your sleep a rest

Source: *Poetry* (October 2008)