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# This Is How It Happens

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# *This Is How It Happens*

JENNIFER J. RANKIN

This is how it happens.

First the sun breaks  
refracting where it touches  
that small shrub, the interstices of this leaf,  
dust on the surface of hair

scattering this world  
entering the silence.

There are moments of placing hands on a table  
and children entering the house.  
There is the gap between the calling and answering of birds  
there is fable, and there is  
the thin distance of two old trees.

Then words.  
Mumbling refrains  
rising and falling in this same room  
shuffling apart into meaning  
and back again.

Then there are letters.  
Wispy black strokes on fine crinkled airpaper.  
Offerings of time and place.  
Towards the end three poems come like letters.  
Towards the end, like prayers.

This is how it happens, believe me.  
This is the healing of the spirit.

Friends appear.  
Thresholds are weighted with faces  
straining oddly with newness

harsh almost, these faces,  
branded with this first time  
this untried reaching out of the hitherto.

Unpeeling habits we stutter  
standing like this in the doorway.  
Stammer against memory! Stammer against mist!

and I ask myself, why are they here?  
knowing as I know the lack of what has gone before  
when the emptiness was unfilled even with silence

but as I look at these faces  
I see my own unknowing  
and this lack of understanding  
becomes its own numb beckoning.

Mornings are given back

to be tasted again, to be moved amongst  
to be all those other mornings

stretching ahead  
rolling endlessly back

to that time before mornings began  
to Not-morning, that shadow that constantly threatens,  
still living as it does in our own unseeing.

But now I am free to rejoice

raucous and clamouring cries.

I exhort the sky to break through the walls of my house  
and it does.

I urge the grass to deepen the green of its greenest parts  
and it does.

I look into the earth and it spills out its mineral self.

I walk amongst my own body and it is filled with light.