The Question Prompt

Let today’s poem ask questions or be about questions generally.

Twenty Questions

Did I forget to look at the sky this morning when I first woke up? Did I miss the willow tree? The white gravel road that goes up from the cemetery, but to where? And the abandoned house on the hill, did it get even a moment? Did I notice the small clouds so slowly moving away? And did I think of the right hand of God? What if it is a slow cloud descending on earth as rain? As snow? As shade? Don’t you think I should move on to the mop? How it just sits there, too often unused? And the stolen rose on its stem? Why would I write a poem without one? Wouldn’t it be wrong not to mention joy? Sadness, its sleepy-eyed twin? If I’d caught the boat to Mykonos that time when I was nineteen would the moon have risen out of the sea and shone on my life so clearly I would have loved it just as it was? Is the boat still in the harbor, pointing in the direction of the open sea? Am I still nineteen? Going in or going out, can I let the tide make of me what it must? Did I already ask that?

Jim Moore.

Ask The Rain What It Knows

About leaving, about trouble, about a man and a woman? The train pulls out of the station, the rain knows the answer as it blotches her white dress. What ink is used to write your name
across an old man’s letter?  
He’s been waiting so long in the rain,  
on the Williamsburg bridge.  
Where were you when I heard my name  
through the half-yellow streetlight?  
Outside the subway station  
the year Jolie died,  
and they scattered her ashes  
beside Emma Goldman’s grave  
and I turned to find no one  
but the rain darkening the platform.  
What was it you were scattering  
across Lake Michigan?  
Spattering against the cracked pane  
of some tenement  
across from the El  
weaving its way through the trestle  
of voices?  
You at the table reading  
about the dying bees.  
Where were you when we lit  
a thousand lanterns above the dirt tracks  
and the stock cars,  
and the bald children  
brought there for charity  
reached up their thin arms  
towards the embered dark?  
What towers and tenements  
collapsed?  
What empty stairwells?  
What schoolyard without rhymes?  
And here you come tap tapping  
at memory’s strange city  
bringing back what it was  
we were asking  
on the smudged platform.  
Hands clapping across the sky.  

Sean Thomas Dougherty  
in *Not All Saints.*
From Pablo Neruda’s Book of Questions  
(a hodgepodge all out of order):

Am I sometimes evil  
or am I always good?  

Do we learn kindness  
or the mask of kindness?  

And what importance do I have  
in the courtroom of oblivion?  

Who can convince the sea  
to be reasonable?  

Where is the child I was,  
still inside me or gone?  

Was it where they lost me  
that I finally found myself?  

from The Book of Questions  
translated by William O’Daly

The Story of Heat

After all this way,  
I only want your questions.  
The things you and I conclude  
don’t matter much.  
I don’t know why.  
It just is so.  

For all our talk of truth and God  
won’t insure that you and I  
are true or holy.  

Just feed me your questions.  
I need them to keep this  
fire going.  

Mark Nepo  
In Reduced to Joy