

The Poems that Get Away

Write about those poems that fly by without capture.

There Are Poems

There are poems
that are never written,
that simply move across
the mind
like skywriting
on a still day.
Slowly the first word
drifts west,
the last letters dissolve
on the tongue,
and what is left
is the pure blue
of insight, without cloud
or comfort.

Linda Pastan
in Carnival Evening

Offering

I made a poem going
to sleep last night, woke
in sunlight, it was clean forgotten.

If it was any good, gods
of the great darkness
where sleep goes and farther
death goes, you not named,

then as true offering
accept it.

Ursula K. Le Guin
in *Wild Angels*

Dust

Someone spoke to me last night,
told me the truth. Just a few words,
but I recognized it.
I knew I should make myself get up,
write it down, but it was late,
and I was exhausted from working
all day in the garden, moving rocks.
Now I remember only the flavor—
not like food, sweet or sharp.
More like a fine powder, like dust.
And I wasn't elated or frightened,
but simply rapt, aware.
That's how it is sometimes—
God comes to your window,
all bright light and black wings,
and you're just too tired to open it.

Dorianne Laux
from *What We Carry*

Dedication

This is to poems that get
lost in the dark,

poems that flutter
away, white moths
just out of reach,

camouflaged against
rough plaster of
bedroom ceiling,
little bumps and
patterns of branches
cast by light from streetlamps,
neighbors' windows,
sometimes the
moon.

In that criss-crossed and
curtained glow
you only see them
when they move.
To grab is
to crush and keep
them earthbound, snow
of bitter wing dust on
your hands and
fingers,

fine as the powder of poems
lost in time, slipped
in among old papers
tossed away, whispers
that now annoy the hair on
the back of your head like a
strand of spider web
you brushed
one high school night,
still sticky with the first
line of your
first poem, caught,
then struggling free:

“Trees and shadows of
trees...”

Jim Natal
Anthologized in *what have you lost?*
Poems selected by Naomi Shihab Nye