



after night rain

Poems | John McManus

a f t e r n i g h t r a i n

J o h n M c M a n u s

tonight I'll stop the neon alley undulating black organs

completely naked the woods empty my head

piercing the fog the minotaur's horns

rooms full of books in the past tense

Pharoah ants boarding the underground

squid tasting the blue labyrinth of her eyes

waves with claws I stroke my dead side

just when I can't keep pretending your ghost

back inside his car the clown removes my flesh

an owl egg hatches behind Christ's body

the last page of the hymn book
a hummingbird I remember
giving birth to

searching for the right words a train passes by

sneakers on a branch closer to the wordless god

the weight of her breast milk boiling inside steel

touching the unknown soldiers spring inside a hole

bit by bit she leaves the room filled with moonlight

a dog howling parcels for the dead man

through the bones
of a misty night
our masks come off

where the trees grow sick of all my problems

calculating the cost of the dead starlings

waking from a dreamless sleep horses with outstretched wings

we find what we were after night rain

talking to sheep skulls in the blue wheelbarrow

clouds in a stream the old man stops to piss

tethered to all within this consequence of stars

so high my heart becomes a bell

crows refuse
to die inside
the slaughterhouse

a bowl of bruised fruit the fame begins to fade

somewhere inside me slugs are feeding darkness

spring wind naming her occupational hazard

poisoned water bodies in the street laughing clowns

the war we watch inside a clock's face

behind the hinges
of your face
a demon burrows down

devouring the moon wolves wearing mother's clothes

breadcrumbs and broken windows the faun starts to cry

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Cover photo by Alex Knight

Deep into the rich loam of earth these poems, each exquisitely formed, are the real thing. Within, John McManus presents new conceptions for the short poem and haiku in English ~ "tethered to all within this consequence of stars" they shine, refulgent with rare insight and craft. This book offers gifts from a gifted poet, and is highly recommended!

Dr. Richard Gilbert, author of the Disjunctive Dragonfly

This collection is reminiscent of the in-betweenness of walking home in the small hours when logic and the reality of daylight do not apply. We stumble down ill-lit alleys that disappear when we search for words as trains that pass us by. Some things remain a tangled ramble extinguished by the commuter's morning, sometimes the parallel words of night and day survive together, as they have in this collection that made it through the neon alley. A brilliant new poetry collection sees the light of day, catch it while you can before midnight starts again.

Alan Summers, co-founder, Call of the Page