

## **Rainer Maria Rilke**

### **I Am, O Anxious One**

I am, O Anxious One. Don't you hear my voice  
surging forth with all my earthly feelings?  
They yearn so high, that they have sprouted wings  
and whitely fly in circles round your face.  
My soul, dressed in silence, rises up  
and stands alone before you: can't you see?  
don't you know that my prayer is growing ripe  
upon your vision as upon a tree?  
If you are the dreamer, I am what you dream.  
But when you want to wake, I am your wish,  
and I grow strong with all magnificence  
and turn myself into a star's vast silence  
above the strange and distant city, Time.

### **You Who Never Arrived**

You who never arrived  
in my arms, Beloved, who were lost  
from the start,  
I don't even know what songs  
would please you. I have given up trying  
to recognize you in the surging wave of  
the next moment. All the immense  
images in me -- the far-off, deeply-felt  
landscape, cities, towers, and bridges, and  
unsuspected turns in the path,  
and those powerful lands that were once  
pulsing with the life of the gods--  
all rise within me to mean  
you, who forever elude me.

You, Beloved, who are all  
the gardens I have ever gazed at,  
longing. An open window  
in a country house-- , and you almost  
stepped out, pensive, to meet me.  
Streets that I chanced upon,--  
you had just walked down them and vanished.  
And sometimes, in a shop, the mirrors  
were still dizzy with your presence and,  
startled, gave back my too-sudden image.  
Who knows? Perhaps the same  
bird echoed through both of us  
yesterday, separate, in the evening...

## **Falling Stars**

Do you remember still the falling stars  
that like swift horses through the heavens raced  
and suddenly leaped across the hurdles  
of our wishes--do you recall? And we  
did make so many! For there were countless numbers  
of stars: each time we looked above we were  
astounded by the swiftness of their daring play,  
while in our hearts we felt safe and secure  
watching these brilliant bodies disintegrate,  
knowing somehow we had survived their fall.

## **The Vast Night**

Often I gazed at you in wonder: stood at the window begun  
the day before, stood and gazed at you in wonder. As yet  
the new city seemed forbidden to me, and the strange  
unpersuadable landscape darkened as though  
I didn't exist. Even the nearest Things  
didn't care whether I understood them. The street  
thrust itself up to the lamppost: I saw it was foreign.  
Over there—a room, feelable, clear in the lamplight—,  
I already took part; they noticed, and closed the shutters.  
Stood. Then a child began crying. I knew what the mothers  
all around, in the houses, were capable of—, and knew  
the inconsolable origins of all tears.  
Or a woman's voice sang and reached a little beyond  
expectation, or downstairs an old man let out  
a cough that was full of reproach, as though his body were right  
struck—, but I counted too late, it tumbled on past me.—  
Like a new boy at school, who is finally allowed to join in,  
but he can't catch the ball, is helpless at all the games  
the others pursue with such ease, and he stands there staring  
into the distance,—where—?: I stood there and suddenly  
grasped that it was you: you were playing with me, grown-up  
Night, and I gazed at you in wonder. Where the towers  
were raging, where with averted fate  
a city surrounded me, and indecipherable mountains  
camped against me, and strangeness, in narrowing circles,  
prowled around my randomly flickering emotions—:  
it was then that in all your magnificence  
you were not ashamed to know me. Your breath moved tenderly  
over my face. And, spread across solemn distances,  
your smile entered my heart.