

Selected poems from Picnic, Lightning, by Billy Collins

“Morning”

Why do we bother with the rest of the day,
the swale of the afternoon,
the sudden dip into evening,

then night with his notorious perfumes,
his many pointed stars?

This is the best—
throwing off the light covers,
feet on the cold floor,
and buzzing around the house on espresso—

maybe a splash of water on the face,
a palmful of vitamins—
but mostly buzzing around the house on espresso,

dictionary and atlas open on the rug,
the typewriter waiting for the key of the head,
a cello on the radio,

and, if necessary, the windows—

trees fifty, a hundred years old
out there,
heavy clouds on the way
and the lawn steaming like a horse
in the early morning.

“Snow”

I cannot help noticing this slow Monk solo
seems to go somehow
with the snow
that is coming down this morning,

how the notes and spaces accompany
its easy falling
on the geometry of the ground,
on the flagstone path,
the slanted roof,
and the angles of the split rail fence

as if he had imagined a winter scene
as he sat at the piano
late one night at the Five Spot
playing “Ruby My Dear.”

Then again, it's the kind of song
that would go easily with rain
or a tumult of leaves,

and for that matter it's a snow
that could attend
an adagio for strings,
the best of the Ronettes,
or George Thorogood and the Destroyers.

It falls so indifferently
into the spacious white parlor of the world,
if I were sitting here reading
in silence,
reading the morning paper
or reading *Being and Nothingness*,
not even letting the spoon
touch the inside of the cup,
I have a feeling
the snow would even go perfectly with that.