

Aimless Love by Billy Collins

This morning as I walked along the lakeshore,
I fell in love with a wren
and later in the day with a mouse the cat had dropped under the dining room table.
In the shadows of an autumn evening,
I fell for a seamstress
still at her machine in the tailor's window,
and later for a bowl of broth,
steam rising like smoke from a naval battle.
This is the best kind of love, I thought,
without recompense, without gifts,
or unkind words, without suspicion, or silence on the telephone.
The love of the chestnut,
the jazz cap and one hand on the wheel.
No lust, no slam of the door –
the love of the miniature orange tree,
the clean white shirt,
the hot evening shower,
the highway that cuts across Florida.
No waiting, no huffiness, or rancor –
just a twinge every now and then for the wren who had built her nest
on a low branch overhanging the water
and for the dead mouse, still dressed in its light brown suit.
But my heart is always propped up in a field on its tripod, ready for the next arrow.
After I carried the mouse by the tail to a pile of leaves in the woods,
I found myself standing at the bathroom sink
gazing down affectionately at the soap,
so patient and soluble, so at home in its pale green soap dish.
I could feel myself falling again
as I felt its turning in my wet hands
and caught the scent of lavender and stone.

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