

Five Poems

Jacques Prevel

Translated from French by Caleb Bouchard

Like the fantastic wind

Like the fantastic wind
The wind which takes its shape from swept grass
Your voice echoes and confuses me
And its clamor proclaims all I've known
Frenzy, joy and silence and pain
And my crucified life scattered in time
Thrown about by your hands to our erased being
Told by my face and told by your face
And I remember the regrets
Those winged monsters of great departures
Darkening the sky and delivering us the night
And in their talons taking us to a country
where we were human
Standing faceless.

August 30th, 1943

On the edge of autumn

On the edge of autumn
I reckon like an unlucky gambler
Misfortune and loneliness rising upon
Rumor with the wind of equinox
Which seems to me the very voice of complaint and terror
A mental winter is dawning
And flogs us and destroys the pale summer that was
Overwhelmed in fatality
And in our lives surrounded by a bird of prey
Obscured by wings
Beak with blood
Myriads of mirrors punctured by larks whose
Song is no longer recognizable

I tried the impossible in vain

To Marthe and Michel

I tried the impossible in vain
But it was too late when I came
There was nothing left
There was only a sound of wind like a passage
A dry snap of complaints and muffled words
There was only a vibrant loneliness
A frenzied spell of gestures
And the void that precedes an unseen presence

I stayed in my stupor listening to the sound of the wind

If they look for me

If they look for me
It's on a winter morning that I will be found
A winter morning in the rain
A morning when life is no longer chance
But everything remains the same
The trees, the pavement, the deserted streets
I will be found in a useless
Word that doesn't make sense
A word which has no reason

I came to save you from death

I came to save you from death
Because you were sad and like me
Your eyes had widened with fever and your tears flowed
Down your pale and livid cheeks
You had played your beauty with contempt
You had played like I knew how to with life
And it was a winter evening
It was a winter night with the snow's embers and a prostitute on the pavement
Our love dwindled along with her tenderness
Reaching the limit of this game whose winner is misfortune
We were at the pinnacle of our mortal coil
Our burgeoning desire had burned us like snow

