

DAN ROSENBERG

TO LOVE THE DARK

You must be very tall
to love the dark. You need
sturdy legs and a heart
that struggles just enough
to bring your blood about them
and raise it again to your head.
You must feel in your chest
the finite days of its function.
If you venture out in the morning
you must trail a long shadow
behind you like a reminder
as you lope and stroll,
you must pretend to joy
so well you convince yourself
but deep under your skin
where light will never peek
until the end, you must hold
the dark close. If you buy
a muffin and eat the muffin,
find the pleasure in the cavern
of your mouth. Keep your chin
down. A short man may
feel a cousin to night, able
to skirt any perimeter
in the shade of the fence,
but this easy, familial comfort
is not to love the dark. To love
the dark you must wear
bright white shirts, you must
hum along with the fungi
as they decompose their way
through the world. You must
kiss the desert even when you
are on a raft alone and far

from any shore. There is for you
no brunch among acquaintances
with their blather and drivel,
no lingering in the dentist's chair
or stalking a squirrel across
the telephone lines. You must
be very tall and still to love
the dark, a bishop pine,
whose cones stay sealed
for many years until the fire,
when they release black seeds.