
POETRY | SPRING 2023

Cicadas' Song (after "I am Offering This Poem" by Jimmy Santiago Baca)

By Mitchell Nohner

I promised that I would be here
sitting palm against palm
when the world outside no longer cares
if you live or die.

Yet our world is now inside.

Inside fourteen stories of labyrinthian hallways
of tidal waves of scrubs pouring from elevators
of medicines and chemicals filling veins—diluting
the blood that once pulsed
strong as a cicadas' song in August.

And you lie before me
thin like the corn stalks in November.

I want to wrap you in think quilts
share spoonfuls of stews
until both our hearts and bellies are full.

Yet you haven't raised a spoon to your lips for days.

And so I come
day in day out like the tides in January.

I am offering you myself
my hand pressed tight against yours
since I have nothing else to give.

Hold it

like the first orange of the season
citrus rivulets squeezed tight between fingers.

Feel it holding you
like your breath on the first dive into the lake in May.

And when you decide this time is the time
you don't resurface—know
I am watching from shore.
With nothing else to give
but myself.

Mitch Nohner is an internal medicine doctor in Omaha, Neb. Outside the hospital, he spends most of his time in hedonistic pursuit of the best food/drinks in the Midwest.

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