

Adah · *Larry Levis*

I can remember the almost private outburst  
Of rain on the tin sheds:  
A sound as precise as a small fire taking hold  
Of its kindling;  
Or, when the rain stopped, the drone of flies  
And their shining—  
And how the horses outside  
Would lift and drop a hoof in the pasture  
As they grazed, heads down,  
Or flicked their ears back. . .  
And the skin inside their ears resembling a human's,  
But softer, really, than anyone's  
I have ever met, or will meet now.  
Not even  
The balding widow mesmerized by fans  
And by Sundays  
Who waits all night now for sleep  
Can do without counting horses and flies  
Until she is alone,  
Before sleep, and lying in the stiffened  
Almost righteous position that pain allows her.  
And as if prayer could collapse  
The tool shed and split the shining anvil  
Inside it,  
She will not do anything as precise and blasphemous  
As pray anymore.  
She will only listen, and think,  
Maybe, of horses,  
And do as little as horses do,  
Which is her privilege, as it is the river's,  
Or the heavy woods, which do nothing.  
As even the mottled grass  
In which the kidnappers smothered the child  
Does nothing, does not even conceal the place  
Now that they have  
Gone on, without speaking, into a stand of elms  
And into history.  
Though not before they threatened a farm wife  
Who was able to sift strychnine into their lunch  
And serve it to them  
With a tight smile and a forehead as cool

To the touch as it is now,  
When she remembers it all before sleep  
And remembers  
Trailing them at a distance until they  
Both fell.  
And beside a field of white stubble  
And a road she had always lived near,  
And always would live near,  
She watched them without any curiosity.  
She thought they sounded  
Like two syllables that could not find their  
Proper places  
When someone is trying to say a word.  
It was hot.  
They were human.  
She felt her thin dress aging in the sun.