

Five Poems · *Debra Allbery*

STONE SOUP

This is the kind of light
that makes you hungry
for structure.

Rickie Lee Jones

There's a sleep you pull on like a jacket
that's too thin and small, and the night
invites itself deep in your bones.
In the first breaths of that waking the forgotten
you dream over and over lies cold
and intimate beside you, and you try
so hard to recognize it, it disappears.

It's easier, you tell yourself, to do without.
Easier to keep your ownings contained in one room,
your thoughts no wider than a week
at the outside. Inside, all you need to know
beats in its rib cage or curls upstairs into sleep,
and you travel light; moving, you keep
to the selvage edge of your life.

A man like this might hitch the interstates
like a folk hero, changing his name and story
in each town he jumps into, moving
to the next meal, next odd job, next bed.
A woman like this might move
from one-room to one-room, a quiet boarder,
her few boxes of bare keepsakes
the fixed and shifting natural elements
of her life. And if this man and woman

meet each other bent toward the same light
they might discover they share
a language, and in speaking it open the mouth
of something they'll have to feed for years.
See how close and warm they sleep, though.
This is an old story, and people will pay
to hear about it, this falling—
call it waking, call it a long release—
into love. It has to do
with the storage of the heart, the hunger
we're willing to risk on the outside
chance of getting home.

PRODUCE

No mountains or ocean, but we had orchards
in northwestern Ohio, roadside stands
telling what time of summer: strawberries,
corn, apples—and festivals to parade
the crops, a Cherry Queen, Sauerkraut Dance.
Somebody'd block off a street in town,
put up beer tents and a tilt-a-whirl.

Our first jobs were picking berries.
We'd ride out early in the back of a pickup—
kids my age, and migrants, and old men
we called bums in sour flannel shirts
smash-stained with blueberries, blackberries,
raspberries. Every fall we'd see them
stumbling along the tracks, leaving town.

Vacationland, the signs said, from here to Lake Erie.
When relatives drove up we took them to see
The Blue Hole, a fenced-in bottomless pit
of water we paid to toss pennies into—
or Prehistoric Forest, where, issued machine guns,