

Days · Elizabeth Spires

Like jumping rope,
like old *New Yorkers* piling up,
or the inscrutable faces of dominoes lined in a row,
the days arrive, knocking insistently,
and you
on the other side of the door, not breathing or moving,
watching them through the keyhole.

Arm in arm, they goose-step down the boulevards —
so many of them! —
like actors out of work,
dressed in moth-eaten costumes and old band uniforms,
and always
the black armbands, a reminder of their constant decimation
(soon to be replaced with younger, more arrogant days
than the ones you have known).

Oh, you have suffered for them!
For their high-stepping ways!

Once you were dutiful.
Entertaining famous days of boredom
who languished
for weeks in peignoirs and smoking gowns,
calling out weakly, like invalids,
to be waited on.
And the forgotten days that took their revenge —
like drowned children under the pond
forever crying
in your sleep to please find them.

Some you ran away from —
they crouch in dark places, or hire hit men,
waiting for *the right time*.

Old debts accumulate. Losses
pile up. You think back, unwillingly, too nostalgic,
to days of poignancy and days of despair,
days of no letters,
 and the hoped-for days of love,
mirage of tomorrow's tomorrow.
You who have only the present, never the future.