

The Dead

for my father

He has come back.
He has come from outside himself to assume
the proportions of dream, in a city of symbols falling
from deliverance, offered up to speech.
He mouths voiceless vowels, but cannot settle
in the complex room with unwashed windows
and sparse light in starfish and jellyfish shapes,
moving between moments. He is the sovereign
of helpless beauty, full of advice and all
dressed up with nowhere to go. Tears are not
required, there is not long, there is no need
for reassurance. Pigeons scrape the eaves.
He moves about restlessly, smiling
as if he had given himself over
to the sea or the lobes of harbour underlapping
the sky. Books are of no consequence,
he can no longer read. He understands
the weather and is interested in me.
Nights come by, from time to time, but mostly
days with a hard yellowness fix themselves
in his eye. He wears the clothes of a family
man and has no need for food. He needs
only a little time, enough for love.
He only wants to talk.

David Musgrave