
POET'S PEN

Dan Rifenburg is an award-winning Houston poet who earned an MA from the University of Florida, where he studied with Donald Justice, a well-known 20th-century poet and teacher. He has published two books of poems and now devotes his time to writing and teaching with an emphasis on outreach poetry workshops for veterans. "Symeon: The Light Of The Spirit" first appeared in *Peacock Journal* and refers to Symeon, the New Theologian, an 11th-century Byzantine Christian monk and poet.

Symeon: The Light Of The Spirit

Possessing it, I do not see it.
I contemplate it
When it goes away.

I quickly dash to seize it
And it completely flies off.

I am enflamed.
I ask in tears to be beaten,
To be trampled underfoot like dirt.

I ask for the all-powerful humility,
Stripping and pruning the will,
Renouncing world, pride, glory.

I choke in my desire to seize it
And all is night.
My poor hands are empty.

Then, dimly, like a delicate ray, the light,
Minute, then suddenly enveloping the mind,
Enrapturing in ecstasy

And then rapidly forsaking me, disappearing
So I might not die, not burst or vomit
With the food of perfect men.

How to recall its beauty?
How to understand?

It appears not when we desire it
But when we need it, are in trouble
And totally worn out.

After I have wept a lot,
Embracing my poverty,
I do not know what to do.

I cannot laugh.
I cannot look at man.
I despair of seeing it again.

I consent to cease.
I sit down and weep.

Then, mystically arrived,
Coming from afar,
A sweet light is kindled,

Inviting silence,
Stirred up by waiting,
Treading where humility
Has beaten down the grasses:

Entirely incomprehensible,
Inaccessible light,
Light which operates everything,
Flame reaching to heaven.

It rejoices in my lowliness.
It converses with me.
It enlightens me, looks at me
And I also look at it.

It tears me away from the world
And commands me: have mercy on all
Who are in the world.

It is in my heart; it exists in heaven.
Now the dragon is trampled underfoot.
I have discovered the day which has no end.
It invites me to ebb and flow with it,
To go in and out
And rest in its complacency.

I bear water to the peasants in the fields
With this jewel in my heart.

—Dan Rifenburgh