

Robert Dana

Driving the Coeur d'Alene Without You

Rain shadows the lake,
and the road curves away and then back,
back and then up, and the sun
appears and disappears.

Below,
the knifetip flash and white wing-dip of mainsails,
the blue of sunburst spinnakers.

In a green fjord,
a canopied motor launch turns the water back
in two icy curls from its prow.

I tell you,
the dumb stain on my shirtpocket
could pass for loneliness.

I want it over quickly.

One by one,
the bays go by: Beauty, Turner, Bell...
and long,
dusty constellations of mountain asters.

At Powderhorn,
I pass a family of three
picking berries.

The woman,
a print dress in the brambles.
The man hardly glances up.

Their boy stands
stock still in his faded, dirt-stained t-shirt,
watching me pass,

his eyes solemn with worry
like the eyes
of any young, wild thing.

At Harrison Flats,
the sky is cut by wires, and a combine
dies in a stubblefield.

I am numb.

I drive on
toward the house I live in
that is not mine,

and where,
so that I will never feel shame,
so that I will not dream,

you left
stalked and whiskered heads of wheat
in a ripple-glass pitcher

beside the door.