
barriers of experience
Dianne Hardin

i want to have
the dark half-circles under your eyes
the reddened whiteness and swollen eyelids
with wet streaks tracing invisible bruises
down your cheeks, through your chest.
without the marks i cannot see your pain.
and if you are unable to tell me, i cannot listen.

i want to feel
the aches you can't describe
fragments of your beauty lost to prejudice
the words that pierce your gut and leave you drained—
shit and blood stain the floor and
it is what is gone that helped you live.

i want to suffer
feel despair so intense
that i no longer want to live.
for your every thought is a virus
racing through your mind to snap bones of joy,
slash the skin of happy memories,
and rip out the heart of the meaning of your life.
it all reeks of a death without chance of resurrection.
i must enter your quarantined skull.

so i can tell you i know what it's like
and speak your language of experience.
so you will shatter your stone lips and
and i can hear you through battered ears.