

Stones to Mark the Path

I

Love is a graceful hound. He comes
Swiftly, silently, through the wood,
Tracking down all defenseless things,
Drinking sustenance from their blood.

And with relentless claws, with teeth
Polished and strong, to the very bone
He rends the quivering flesh, then leaves
His victim's pitiful skeleton.

Scurrying creatures of the wood,
At last you will find yourselves undone
By a bewitching, lovely hound,
A murderer cloaked in beauty. Run!

II

Across the mysterious crystal of my heart,
Shadow without substance, you must pass,
Leaving the crystal empty when you go,
Not to be held a captive in the glass.

Only a bright dream flashing over! Then
Glowing, an empty symbol, against the night,
The delicate globe will shatter, will become
Pieces with jagged edges, diffused with light.

III

Marking my path with crumbs, a child
Lovely and lost, I came into
A tangled wood, whence is no way out,
Now that the night is deepening blue;
Now that the wild birds flying over
Call to each other with alien cries.
I alone in the world of creatures
Stand forsaken by all the wise.
If I had filled my pocket full
Of stones to guide me back to town!
But the birds have eaten all my crumbs,
And the wind shrieks, and the night comes down.

—Betty Richart