

**STEPHEN COLE / JACK FOLEY: CALL & RESPONSE**

STEPHEN COLE:

Alone, almost

At this late hour  
I hear the cold rain.  
The window rubes me into thinking  
Melody has a chance rhythm.

It will freeze before sunrise  
So I know the cats  
And the ghosts will cuddle close to me.

Yes, I sleep with cats and ghosts—  
And the ghosts, lacking body warmth  
Try to bed me down in the dark.  
There is not much I can do about it.

The cats always have a plan of their own.  
The ghosts are under contract to my nightmares.  
Believe it or not  
They have a mitigating part to play  
In the night terrors. Often  
They are the crown extras to my guilt.

I'm not sure what language they speak  
Because they never speak directly to me.  
I think they talk among themselves—  
But when I'm close enough to hear them,  
They go silent.

Truth is they are mostly here  
To knock things over in the night.

JACK FOLEY:

I read the poem, commented, "As always, self-contemplation, bone deep" and wrote,

"AS ALWAYS, SELF-CONTEMPLATION, BONE DEEP"

Thinking of the dark we must all face  
(As we do  
As we age)  
I read your poem of the night--  
It's full of fine, resonant lines  
("I sleep with cats and ghosts")--  
And I feel the shuddery presence  
Of self-recognition.  
Though I have no cats,  
I have many ghosts  
And my life is alive  
With a dark Catholicism  
That I have rejected  
And hate in some ways  
But which colors me  
Constantly.  
It is the blindness to my insight  
The undercurrent  
I am loathe to admit,  
Though without it  
I have no childhood.  
Your poem brings me to the brink  
Of a particular darkness I had not seen before,  
Though what blindness accompanies  
This insight I cannot say.  
How I wish it were all true--  
All the fantasy of salvation.  
How I know it is not.  
We live with so much darkness.  
Thoughtless creatures  
Live long.  
We who contemplate--  
Who live for consciousness--  
Die young.

["The unicellular animals are practically immortal; the complexity of the individual spells death."--Jane Ellen Harrison, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (1925)]