

NO REASON

## The Poiema Poetry Series

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Poems are windows into worlds; windows into beauty, goodness, and truth; windows into understandings that won't twist themselves into tidy dogmatic statements; windows into experiences. We can do more than merely peer into such windows; with a little effort we can fling open the casements, and leap over the sills into the heart of these worlds. We are also led into familiar places of hurt, confusion, and disappointment, but we arrive in the poet's company. Poetry is a partnership between poet and reader, seeking together to gain something of value—to get at something important.

Ephesians 2:10 says, “We are God’s workmanship . . .” *poiema* in Greek—the thing that has been made, the masterpiece, the poem. The Poiema Poetry Series presents the work of gifted poets who take Christian faith seriously, and demonstrate in whose image we have been made through their creativity and craftsmanship.

These poets are recent participants in the ancient tradition of David, Asaph, Isaiah, and John the Revelator. The thread can be followed through the centuries—through the diverse poetic visions of Dante, Bernard of Clairvaux, Donne, Herbert, Milton, Hopkins, Eliot, R. S. Thomas, and Denise Levertov—down to the poet whose work is in your hand. With the selection of this volume you are entering this enduring tradition, and as a reader contributing to it.

—D.S. Martin  
Series Editor

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JACK STEWART



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*for Sherri*

*What saint strained so much,  
Rose on such lopped limbs to a new life?*

—THEODORE ROETHKE

*. . . serious doubt is confirmation of faith.*

—PAUL TILLICH

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Islands of algae just off the bank,  
A dead fish wedged in broken cattails,  
The shore grass slick and janky  
In the rotten air—what  
God would sacrifice himself for that?

It was hard to keep footing on the wet grass.  
My heels dug lesions with every step. I had  
Come with no purpose but to clear my head,  
Let the measured hours lose focus.  
In the dusk, had the water gone down less

Than the mud had risen? I think what I wanted  
Was to want to go back. Holy narratives  
Return to water. No birds. No overcast heron  
Balancing on its secret, only silence sainting  
The sky. Faith is a slick stone to stand upon.

I sat down and let the wet seep through my pants,  
Felt the slime on my skin, listened to the pond barely  
Shrug its shoulders. I felt the wind wince  
A few times. Until I saw pity in the evidence,  
That stagnant light, that sky stripped bare.