

hush: unbutton sunset

by Katherine E. Young

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Arlington, VA, Poet Laureate program*

hush: unbutton sunset
let soft breeze skim your skin
on sidewalks people sigh
shake loose the day's last stone
from shoes that rub heels fine
buses abandon asphalt
to doze in antipodean lots
amid nimbi of razor wire

hush: unbutton sunset
unloose the coils of day
appointments at a quick-step
headlines deadlines red lights
hand-lettered signs
aligned in highway islands
amid the sea of vehicles
veteran—homeless—hungry

hush: unbutton sunset
fold back the flaps of evening
examine your ineffectual hands
scrolling through the pages
of mute anonymous faces
a man on hunger strike
a child warehoused in a cage
in a repurposed Walmart
adrift in the digital night

hush: unbutton sunset
dismiss your fear of the dark
in all the centuries
of our unlearning
we've saved only ourselves
and that only by the grace
of the god of small favors
and as twilight falls on the terrace
and ice melts in your glass

[no stanza break]

and your son comes for a kiss
to be wrapped in your arms and
carried to his air-conditioned room
you who believe in so little
must still believe in evening
enough to carry on