

Things I Didn't Know I Loved
by Nazim Hikmet

it's 1962 March 28th
I'm sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train
night is falling
I never knew I liked
night descending like a tired bird on a smoky wet plain
I don't like
comparing nightfall to a tired bird

And here I've loved rivers all this time
Whether motionless like this they curl skirting the hills
European hills crowned with chateaus
Or whether stretched out flat as far as the eye can see
I know this has troubled people before And will trouble those after me
I know all this has been said a thousand times before
And will be said after me

Flowers come to mind for some reason
Poppies cactuses jonquils
In the jonquil garden in Kadikoy Istanbul
I kissed Marika
Fresh almonds on her breath
I was seventeen
My heart on a swing touched the sky
I didn't know I loved flowers
Friends sent me three red carnations in prison

I just remembered the stars
I love them too
Whether I'm floored watching them from below
Or whether I'm flying at their side

Snow flashes in front of my eyes
Both heavy wet steady snow and the dry
whirling kind
I didn't know I liked snow

I never knew I loved the sun
Even when setting cherry-red as now
In Istanbul too it sometimes sets in postcard colors
But you aren't about to paint it that way
I didn't know I loved the sea
Except the Sea of Azov
Or how much

I didn't know I loved clouds
Whether I'm under or up above them
whether they look like giants or shaggy white beasts
moonlight
strikes me
I like it

I didn't know I liked rain
Whether it falls like a fine net or splatters against the glass
my heart leaves me tangled up in a net or trapped inside a drop and takes off for uncharted
countries I didn't know I loved rain but why did I suddenly discover all these passions sitting by
the window on the Prague-Berlin train
is it because I'm half-dead from thinking about someone back in Moscow
her hair straw-blond eyelashes blue

The train plunges on through the pitch-black night
I never knew I liked the night pitch-black
sparks fly from the engine
I didn't know I loved sparks
I didn't know I loved so many things and I had to wait until sixty to find it out sitting by the
window on the Prague-Berlin train watching the world disappear as if on a journey of no return

*- Nazim Hikmet, "Things I Didn't Know I Loved" appears in Poems of Nazim Hikmet, translated
by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk. Copyright © 2002.*