

## By Heart

The poem is not your friend.  
The poem is a pest.  
It gets under your skin and  
nestles down inside you.

You would like it to go to sleep,  
give you a break,  
but the poem tosses and turns,  
throwing off its blankets to expose  
this line or that.

The poem does not care about you.  
It is looking for a home,  
and when it finds one in you,  
it will move in for good, or at least  
for a long stay.  
If you ignore it, the poem will pout  
and keep tapping you on the shoulder.  
The poem will tell you,  
“Here. I belong to you.”

The poem doesn't care who wrote it,  
only who gives it residence.  
The poem will  
pick at your scabs,  
make you cry,

yell in your face.  
Then it will pat your back and say,  
“There, there.”

As long as the poem includes  
one line of mystery, it will continue to  
niggle at your thoughts,  
tug at your heart,  
poke you in the gut.  
Repeatedly.

But although it isn't your friend,  
the poem will be  
your companion.  
It will move you,  
agree with your deepest thoughts,  
tell you if you are on track.

Even if you forget one of its lines,  
the poem will reveal the lesson  
in that omission.  
The poem will be  
your teacher.  
And you will love it.