

TEHILA HAKIMI, translated by Rachel and
Adam Seelig

Sacred and Profane

This poet once told me,
poetry is pure.

You have to approach words with the fear of God
the way you hold an ancient Torah scroll found in an archaeological dig.
And underground, in the trenches of meaning,
poets engrave letter by letter in a tablet
like idol worshippers
in the name of the holiest of holy poetry.
There's nothing holy to poetry,
no poetry is holy.

I'll write poetry
like a cockroach leaving tracks on the bathroom floor
like a tired cat in the sun
like a worker in a loud assembly line
on minimum wage and five hours' sleep
like a programmer at Google
under fluorescents

I'll write poetry
from the locker room at the gym
in bed without glasses, one eye shut
(to focus)

You can't distinguish word from word
sacred and profane
ass and mouth
piss and black coffee
used tampon and God
one day I'll be a filthy poet of rats
publishing poems in the sewers.

Give Me One Day

I want you to let me finish a sentence
don't explain anything to me
I want all of you to be quiet
for one whole day
don't talk about anything
fast from words
silence will prevail in government halls
the armed forces will be quiet too

Leaves will rustle outside windows

I'm asking for one day of relative quiet
at the borders and bus stations
without catcalls on the way to the beach
without yelling through car windows
around tables, in kitchens, mothers will talk politics
girls will laugh at their sisters' jokes
and you, shut up.