

BILLY COLLINS

Thieves

I considered myself lucky to notice
on my walk a mouse ducking like a culprit
into an opening in a stone wall,
a bit of fern draped over his disappearance,

for I was a fellow thief
having stolen for myself this hour,
lifting the wedge of it from my daily clock
so I could walk up a wooded hillside
and sit for a while on a rock the size of a car.

Give us this day our daily clock
I started to chant
as I sat on the hood of this Volkswagen of stone,
and give us our daily blood
and our daily patience and some extra patience
until we cannot stand to live any longer.

And there on that granite automobile,
which once moved along
in the monstrous glacial traffic of the ice age
then came to a halt at last on this very spot,

I felt the motion of thought
run out to its paltry edges
before slamming into the walls of its mortal rented room

and then the counter motion of its
tightening on a thing small as a mouse
caught darting into a wall of fieldstones
on what once was a farm north of New York,

my wee, timorous mind darting in after him,
escaping the hawk-prowling sunlight
for a shadowy cave of stone
and the comings and goings of mice—
all that scurrying and the secretive brushing of whiskers.