

DAVID KEPLINGER

from "The Crown of Light at Assisi"

The Forest Where He Instructed Birds

There is a steep ravine. The forest
Is an incline, more cliff than hill.
In San Subasio, little yellow insects, half butterfly,
Half bee, land on my notebook, fall
From trees in rain. I don't know why
No one speaks of them. I make a list:

The first were acts of kindness,
Then he forgave, healed, sat alone,
Before he learned to talk with animals,
To make them go, or stay, at his command.
In the story of the birds, the life of Jesus is the clean
And easy sweep of his hand.

I reel with that hand. How can I reel
And climb, and not come down
Embarrassed, the fool who never spoke
A God damned word? No one has a soul
As low as mine. I watch an insect,
Like the strangest butterfly, dive into the ravine.

Calvetta

In this relief
On her sarcophagus
Calvetta's head is flanked

By a fallen pinecomb
And a standing robin.
Beautiful things
Are coming to fruition
And some do not survive,
The great servants
Of words
Have been saying.
I am a servant
Of that wisdom,
And I believe them.
I believe Calvetta
With her parents lived
On the Umbrian hill
Near this town.
Soon I'll be as old
As Calvetta, as old
As Christ is tonight.
I remember her face,
Expressionless,
Beside the pagoda
Of the pine cone.
She was aged nineteen years
The epitaph read,
Calvetta: Calvetta:
Her eyes so wide open
Instead of a Griffon
To marshal her off,
A robin's enough,
The kind you might see,
For example,
Today.