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# **January Morning: Suite**

Williams, William Carlos, 1883-1963

Ι

I have discovered that most of the beauties of travel are due to the strange hours we keep to see them: the domes of the Church of the Paulist Fathers in Weehawken against a smoky dawn—the heart stirred are beautiful as Saint Peters approached after years of anticipation.

## II

Though the operation was postponed I saw the tall probationers in their tan uniforms hurrying to breakfast!

### III

— and from basement entries neatly coiffed, middle aged gentlemen with orderly moustaches and well-brushed coats

### IV

— and the sun, dipping into the avenues streaking the tops of the irregular red houselets,

and

the gay shadows drooping and drooping.

## V

— and a young horse with a green bed-quilt on his withers shaking his head: bared teeth and nozzle high in the air!

### VI

—and a semicircle of dirt-colored men about a fire bursting from an old ash can,

#### VII

—and the worn, blue car rails (like the sky!) gleaming among the cobbles!

#### VIII

— and the rickety ferry-boat "Arden"! What an object to be called "Arden" among the great piers,—on the ever new river!

"Put me a Touchstone at the wheel, white gulls, and we'll follow the ghost of the *Half Moon* to the North West Passage—and through! (at Albany!) for all that!"

#### IX

Exquisite brown waves—long circlets of silver moving over you! enough with crumbling ice crusts among you! The sky has come down to you, lighter than tiny bubbles, face to face with you! His spirit is

a white gull with delicate pink feet and a snowy breast for you to hold to your lips delicately!

## Х

The young doctor is dancing with happiness in the sparkling wind, alone at the prow of the ferry! He notices the curdy barnacles and broken ice crusts left at the slip's base by the low tide and thinks of summer and green shell-crusted ledges among the emerald eel-grass!

## XI

Who knows the Palisades as I do knows the river breaks east from them above the city—but they continue south — under the sky—to bear a crest of little peering houses that brighten with dawn behind the moody water-loving giants of Manhattan.

## XII

Long yellow rushes bending above the white snow patches; purple and gold ribbon of the distant wood: what an angle you make with each other as you lie there in contemplation.

#### XIII

Work hard all your young days and they'll find you too, some morning staring up under your chiffonier at its warped bass-wood bottom and your soul out! among the little sparrows behind the shutter.

## XIV

— and the flapping flags are at half-mast for the dead admiral.

#### XV

All this —

was for you, old woman. I wanted to write a poem that you would understand. For what good is it to me if you can't understand it? But you got to try hard — But — Well, you know how the young girls run giggling on Park Avenue after dark when they ought to be home in bed? Well,

that's the way it is with me somehow.