

The Zebra

by Carolyn Keefe

I.

I longed for you once,
 to touch you with the palms of my hands,
 to feel the beat of you, steady, sure, regular.
 I longed to walk with you in fields
 of golden apples and scarlet leaves,
 to watch you scratch your back against the bark
 of the toughest tree.
 I longed to see you run the length of the horizon,
 a neat blur against the blue sky,
 a pink cloud at dawn.

II.

Do you dance?
 I don't even know what gives birth to you,
 nor what, ultimately, is responsible for your death.
 Do you stand up before rain, or lie down, like a cow?
 My idea of you is so vague,
 so colorless.
 Did you ever sprout wings?
 Where are you now that I need you?
 I want to hear your bark.
 I want to feel your bite,
 a nip at my toes, perhaps, like winter,
 your breath a warm breeze on a cold day.
 I want to dream you.
 Who, what, do you dream?

III.

I longed for you once,
 arms stretched out, open wide, empty.
 I should have known better.
 When you frolic you do it chameleon-like,
 green against green against green.
 Nothing is all black and white.
 It is the perfect mask.