

Rape Poem – by Marge Piercy (Circles on the water)

There is no difference between being raped
And being pushed down a flight of cement steps
Except that the wounds also bleed inside.

There is no difference between being raped
And being run over by a truck
Except that afterward men ask if you enjoyed it.

There is no difference between being raped
And being bit on the ankle by a rattlesnake
Except that people ask if your skirt was short
And why you were out anyhow.

There is no difference between being raped
And going head first through a windshield
Except that afterward you are afraid not of cars,
But half the human race.

The rapist is your boyfriend's brother.
He sits beside you in the movies eating popcorn.
Rape fattens on the fantasies of the "normal" male
Like a maggot in garbage.

Fear of rape is a cold wind blowing
All of the time on a woman's hunched back.
Never to stroll alone on a sand road through pine woods,
Never to climb a trail across a bald
Without that aluminum in the mouth
When I see a man climbing toward me.

Never to open the door to a knock
Without that razor just grazing the throat.
The fear of the dark side of the hedges,
The back seat of the car, the empty house
Rattling keys like a snake's warning
The fear of the smiling man
in whose pocket is a knife.
The fear of the serious man
In whose fist is locked with hatred.

All it takes to cast a rapist is seeing your body
As jackhammer, as blowtorch, as machine gun.
All it takes is hating that body
Your own, your self, your muscle that softens to flab.

All it takes is to push what you hate,
What you fear onto the soft alien flesh.
To bucket out invincible as a tank
Armoured with treads without senses
To possess and punish in one act,
To rip up pleasure, to murder those who dare
Live in the leafy flesh open to love. The fear of the smiling man
In whose pocket is a knife.

