

- **Alone By Tomas Transtromer**

I

One evening in February I came near to dying here.
The car skidded sideways on the ice, out
on the wrong side of the road. The approaching cars -
their lights - closed in.

My name, my girls, my job
broke free and were left silently behind
further and further away. I was anonymous
like a boy in a playground surrounded by enemies.

The approaching traffic had huge lights.
They shone on me while I pulled at the wheel
in a transparent terror that floated like egg white.
The seconds grew - there was space in them -
they grew as big as hospital buildings.

You could almost pause
and breathe out for a while
before being crushed.

Then something caught: a helping grain of sand
or a wonderful gust of wind. The car broke free
and scuttled smartly right over the road.

A post shot up and cracked - a sharp clang - it
flew away in the darkness.

Then - stillness. I sat back in my seat-belt
and saw someone coming through the whirling snow
to see what had become of me.

II

I have been walking for a long time
on the frozen Östergötland fields.
I have not seen a single person.

In other parts of the world
there are people who are born, live and die
in a perpetual crowd.

To be always visible - to live
in a swarm of eyes -
a special expression must develop.
Face coated with clay.

The murmuring rises and falls
while they divide up among themselves
the sky, the shadows, the sand grains.

I must be alone
ten minutes in the morning
and ten minutes in the evening.
- Without a programme.

Everyone is queuing at everyone's door.

Many.

One.

Tomas Tranströmer, from *New Collected Poems* (Bloodaxe),
trs. Robin Fulton

<http://anthonywilsonpoetry.com/lifesaving-poems-tomas-transtromers-alone>