

Ronald Pape

The Just Away Songs

He said

I begged her
To leave with me that night
The darkness at its fullest
The coyotes deep soul sleep

She said

He came to me with juniper berries
Should I have refused?
Should I have turned my head
To his asking eyes
While his iris's small circle of green
Within the deep blue
Burned so bright?

Her mother said

My husband returned in the evening
He hung his coat
He sank into his seat
He told me nothing

He said

We flew through the desert
The wading white moon in her hair
The shadows of yuccas spearing the night
We ran to mountains
The green taste of pine nuts

She said

The desert night can grow so cold
I lost my heels to gopher holes
A joshua tore the coat off my back
Everything had thorns or hard sharp leaves
And always he ran ahead

Her mother said

We found her bed empty
No letter no note
My husband dressed and left
I stayed behind

He said

We will not stop
For fire or lights
We will not stop
For snakes or pain
We will not stop
For stones or cold
We will not stop
For dirt or dust
We will not stop

She said

Where are we going?

Her mother said

I waited
My stomach thick and hard
My blood cold and slow
I locked the door to my daughter's room

Her father said

Where was I to look
At midday in the desert?
I saw nothing but lizards
The distortions of false heat water
On the hot soft road
Always just ahead