

## **Under Alien Skies by Yossel Birstein**

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### **At the end of the days**

*Translated by Beni Gothajner*

At the end of the days of the great weeping  
a sorrowing boy came, stepping

to the ruined house, like the time  
the fire-breathed prophet to the valley came.

Uneasy at heart he hurried along  
in search of some words of the snuffed-out song.

But silent as a tomb and eerily great  
the stillness of the house watched over him.

So the boy stood frozen. And dumbly took in  
the encompassing silence of death.

Suddenly he felt a break at the knees  
and his body was drawn to the ground

to the familiar earth, face-down  
as if to beat it with his head.

But silent as a tomb and eerily great  
the stillness of the house watched over him.

The boy drew himself up from the ground,  
smothered the cry of his tormented flesh,

and with a faltering step he let himself cross  
the threshold of the great weeping.

There he stood in that empty room  
like a mourner beside an open grave.

But silent as a tomb and eerily great  
the stillness of the house watched over him.

The boy opened his mouth like Job  
though not to reproach. His broken voice

could barely be heard in the merciless calm:  
Where are they all? Where are they? Where...

His voice was lost among the walls  
the boy covered his face with his hands

and – silent as a tomb and eerily great–  
cried, in the stillness of the ruined house.