

Elegy for Jon

Between a stair and a stair  
You died, alone,  
Not between rock and rock  
Half down the enormous drop of mountain cliff  
Or on the ice-crest  
You might have crossed,  
Fearless, alone, that month  
Of wilderness you dared,  
For love of lonelier wild  
Than most men love,  
Height over height.

Between a stair and a stair.

Not as we feared  
That afternoon you came  
Hours late, when the mountain light  
Had changed toward dusk,  
While we waited,  
Learning fear, counting your power of life  
Against all doubt,  
Until you came  
Smiling out of the forest,  
Treading the upland swale,  
Blithe as a dancer  
After the last pirouette  
That made the tightrope hum.

Between a stair and a stair.