

Spring For Poetry in Takoma Park

HARLEM SHADOWS

I hear the halting footsteps of a lass

In Negro Harlem when the night lets fall

Its veil. I see the shapes of girls who pass

To bend and barter at desire's call.

Ah, little dark girls who in slippered feet

Go prowling through the night from street to street!

Through the long night until the silver break

Of day the little gray feet know no rest;

Through the lone night until the last snow-flake

Has dropped from heaven upon the earth's white breast,

The dusky, half-clad girls of tired feet

Are trudging, thinly shod, from street to street.

Ah, stern harsh world, that in the wretched way

Of poverty, dishonor and disgrace,

Has pushed the timid little feet of clay,

The sacred brown feet of my fallen race!

Ah, heart of me, the weary, weary feet

In Harlem wandering from street to street.

Claude McKay (1881-1941)

Spring for Poetry in Takoma Park, an urban poetry walk, is sponsored by the Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library. Poster designs are by students at the School of Art and Design, Montgomery College, Takoma Park.

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