

# When Dawn Comes to the City

Claude McKay

The tired cars go grumbling by,  
 The moaning, groaning cars,  
 And the old milk carts go rumbling by  
 Under the same dull stars.

5 Out of the tenements, cold as stone,  
 Dark figures start for work;  
 I watch them sadly shuffle on,  
 'Tis dawn, dawn in New York.

10 But I would be on the island of the sea,  
 In the heart of the island of the sea,  
 Where the cocks are crowing, crowing, crowing,  
 And the hens are cackling in the rose-apple tree,  
 Where the old draft-horse is neighing, neighing, neighing  
 Out on the brown dew-silvered lawn,  
 15 And the tethered cow is lowing, lowing, lowing,  
 And dear old Ned is braying, braying, braying,  
 And the shaggy Nannie goat is calling, calling, calling  
 From her little trampled corner of the long wide lea<sup>1</sup>  
 That stretches to the waters of the hill-stream falling  
 20 Sheer upon the flat rocks joyously!  
 There, oh there! on the island of the sea,  
 There I would be at dawn.

The tired cars go grumbling by,  
 The crazy, lazy cars,  
 25 And the same milk carts go rumbling by  
 Under the dying stars.  
 A lonely newsboy hurries by,  
 Humming a recent ditty;  
 Red streaks strike through the gray of the sky,  
 30 The dawn comes to the city.

21 ,] *om. Spr., Cam.*

25 milk carts] milk-carts, *Cam.*

But I would be on the island of the sea,  
 In the heart of the island of the sea,  
 Where the cocks are crowing, crowing, crowing,  
 And the hens are cackling in the rose-apple tree,  
 35 Where the old draft-horse is neighing, neighing, neighing  
     Out on the brown dew-silvered lawn,  
 And the tethered cow is lowing, lowing, lowing,  
 And dear old Ned is braying, braying, braying,  
 And the shaggy Nannie goat is calling, calling, calling  
 40 From her little trampled corner of the long wide lea  
 That stretches to the waters of the hill-stream falling  
     Sheer upon the flat rocks joyously!  
     There, oh there! on the island of the sea,  
     There I would be at dawn.

## Textual Note

This poem also appeared in *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920) and *Cambridge Magazine* (Summer, 1920).

## Editorial Notes

1. **Lea:** A grassy area.