

# HILDE DOMIN

*Translated from German by Annie Stenzel*

## Vademecum

Death is our last resort.  
He sits in us,  
rolled into himself  
like a smooth ball  
or an embryo,  
or perhaps like a little animal  
that you put in a collecting-box  
with holes for air  
and stick in your pocket—  
only much more comfortable.  
He takes up no room  
and needs no passport  
and no extra baggage  
on the transcontinental flights.  
He is always there.  
He answers all the questions  
and asks none.  
He looks at us if we're looking  
and turns around when we leave.  
He demands nothing  
and is not disappointed,  
and hardly complains  
if we forget him for a day  
or for a week.  
And when we are lonely  
and turn the floodlights on him  
he shines warmth back  
like a space heater.  
Death doesn't lie  
and won't be lied to  
and takes no part  
in compromises.

He is neither vendor  
nor product  
in the sale of fear.  
If you're the hand  
if you're the arm  
if you're the heart  
of another living being:  
die quickly.  
With death, unity is permitted.  
If you hasten to be one of the dead  
death will keep the promise.

## Landscape drawing

One must be able to leave  
and yet be like a tree:  
as though our roots stayed in the ground,  
as though the landscape moved and we stood fast.  
One must hold one's breath  
until the wind lets up  
and strange air begins to circle around us,  
until the play of light and shadow,  
of green and blue,  
reveals the old pattern  
and we are at home,  
wherever that may be  
and can sit down and rest,  
as though on the grave  
of our mother.