

## WHY?

Why have I wandered the asphalt of midnight and not known why?  
Not guilt, or joy, or expectation, or even how,  
When clouds were tattered and distance screamed its rage,  
Or when the fog closed in, the strict  
Re-arrangement of stars communicated  
To the attent corpuscles hurrying heartward—and from.

Why did I stand with no motion beneath  
The spilt-ink blackness of spruces and try to hear,  
In the soundlessness of falling snow  
The heart beat I know as the only self  
I know that I know, while History  
Trails its meaning like old cobwebs  
Caught in a cellar broom.

Why should I clamber the cliff gone bone-white in moonlight?  
Just to feel blood dry like crust on my hands, or watch  
The moon westering to the next range,  
The next, and beyond  
To wash the continent, like white spume?  
Why should I wait for the bear's sex-hoot from the valley  
Or the gluttoned owl make utterance?

Why should I wander dark dunes till rollers  
Boom in from Chinaward, stagger and break  
On the beach in white anger, while high to the right  
The North Star holds steady enough to be Truth.

Yes, why all the years and places and nights, have I  
Wandered and not known the question I carried,  
And carry? Yes, sometimes, even by dawn,  
I have seen the first farmer  
Sink steel share in earth, or met,  
Snow-shoed, the trapper set out on his dawn-round,  
Or even, long back, on a street car  
Bound city-ward, watched some old workman,  
Lean over his lunch-box, and yawn.

Robert Penn Warren