

Prayer for My Daughter's Life

[*Könyörgés lányom életéért*](#)

Have you fallen heir to our death,
The fact that we give up the ghost,
Each and everyone, including you,
The hands of the clock bisecting
The minute we breathe our last,
Slicing it in two, then standstill
And that's all there is, nothing more?

Did we come together like scissors
To cut your destiny in two?
When we lay in each other's arms
With your conception in mind,
You, who could not come earlier,
You were cigarettes, bread and rent,
Overcoat, medicines and shoes;

The stale morsels on our table
Were for years your skin and bone,
The wine we drank, your blood;
Our pennies shone like your eyes.
For three years we've been eating you.
Won't you now partake of our flesh?
I implore you to eat us up.

Answer, please, our humble prayer!
Horror-struck I listen to the wolf,
The wolf disguised as a locust
Sawing up the grass with his voice,
Gnawing leaves of grass to the stalk...
It is dark, but lightning brightens
Our meadows with a poppy-flame.

So that God can see, we are burning,
Can see, even if he doesn't exist,

Even if he's blind, we are burning,
Burning like the wood in a pyre,
Burning for you, our little girl,
So that you will stay with us and
Not fall heir to our death too soon.

Translated by Michael Longley

From ***[Selected Poems](#)*** by István Baka

[←](#) [Previous page](#) [Next page](#) [→](#)