

# Ode To The God Of Atheists

ELLEN BASS

The god of atheists won't burn you at the stake  
or pry off your fingernails. Nor will it make you  
bow or beg, rake your skin with thorns,  
or buy gold leaf and stained-glass windows.  
It won't insist you fast or twist  
the shape of your sexual hunger.  
There are no wars fought for it, no women stoned for it.  
You don't have to veil your face for it  
or bloody your knees.  
You don't have to sing.

The plums that bloom extravagantly,  
the dolphins that stitch sky to sea,  
each pebble and fern, pond and fish  
are yours whether or not you believe.

When fog is ripped away  
just as a rust red thumb slides across the moon,  
the god of atheists isn't rewarding you  
for waking up in the middle of the night  
and shivering barefoot in the field.

This god is not moved by the musk  
of incense or bowls of oranges,  
the mask brushed with cochineal,  
polished rib of the lion.  
Eat the macerated leaves  
of the sacred plant. Dance  
till the stars blur to a spangly river.  
Rain, if it comes, will come.  
This god loves the virus as much as the child.